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FEBRUARY—226

MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



FEBRUARY, 1969

VOL. 24, NO. 3

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL RICH MAN'S BLOOD

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Was he madman, common thief—or the ruthless killer men said he was? Mike Shayne had to find out the truth this bullet-studded night—or join the other dead men who had dared to probe the secret of the jewels whose touch meant Murder.

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LEO MARGULIES

Publisher

CYLVIA KLEINMAN

Editorial Director

HOLMES TAYLOR

Associate Editor

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RICH MAN'S

THE NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Madman? Thief? He had been all of these. But now he was dead, and Mike Shayne had promised a girl to find his killer—even if other good men died along the way. . .



MICHAEL SHAYNE got back to his office just after five P.M. that night. He was hot, tired and short-tempered, and in no mood to talk business with anyone—especially not with the cool, elegant gentleman he found waiting in his outer office with Lucy Hamilton.

"Mr. DeBray's been waiting an hour, Michael," Lucy said with a certain reproof in her voice.

Somehow, his brown-eyed secretary always suspected Shayne of coming to the office as little as possible.

"That, Angel, is Mr. DeBray's problem. You're lucky I came back at all. It's after five," Shayne said bluntly.

Lucy Hamilton, who was always impressed by cool, elegant gentlemen, no matter how many times she had seen them turn out

© 1968, by Brett Halliday

BLOOD



to be fourflushers or crooks, raised a sharp eyebrow at Shayne. Mr. DeBray only smiled coolly.

"The wait is not important, Mr. Shayne," DeBray said. "But my time is valuable, I'm afraid, so if we could talk now?"

Shayne felt like heaving the cool Mr. DeBray out bodily, but that was bad for business, so he only nodded grudgingly.

"Okay. Come on in," he said.

Mr. DeBray followed Mike Shayne into his private office. Shayne tossed his panama onto the hat tree and slumped into his desk chair.

"Okay, DeBray. What's your problem?"

DeBray sat, carefully crossed his legs in their fine light gray trousers, and let his nicely-tanned face grow solemn. "My problem, as you put it, Mr. Shayne, is my partner, Wendell Cranston."

"Tell me about him," Shayne said wearily.

DeBray finally lost his cool. "Your manner is offensive, Mr. Shayne, and your temper sullen. I regret that I came, but I was told that you were the best detective in Miami. I need the best."

Shayne cocked a bushy red eyebrow at DeBray, and then grinned. "Okay, sorry. I'm told off. Blame it on the weather and a lousy job I did today. Let's start over. What's up with Wendell Cranston?"

DeBray eyed Shayne, then

shrugged. "Very well. I am in no position to be proud. Cranston has vanished. I cannot find him, and that may ruin me."

"He's done a rabbit?"

"I beg your pardon?" DeBray said, frowning.

"A rabbit, a run-out, a fade?"

"Ah, I see. Well, I suppose he has. Let me start at the beginning."

"That's usually a good place to start," Shayne said dryly.

"Quite," DeBray agreed. "Well, a week ago Wendell left our office, and I haven't seen him since. We are owners of a financial advisory firm, Fiduciary Counsel, Inc. Not market men, although we do advise on investment, but complete financial advice to firms and individuals. Wendell has clients who rely on him and trust him."

"And a run-out kind of shakes them up?"

"Precisely. Ours is a most personal kind of business. His clients don't want me and I agree with them. Wendell knows them and their needs and I don't. We do not operate in such a way that I can just read their files and advise them well. But it is worse than that."

DeBray chewed a lip. "I became concerned about three days ago. Wendell simply had not appeared in the office. So I called his home. His daughter informed me that she did not know where Wendell was—that he had had a

breakdown and had gone for a total rest and cure! A nervous breakdown!"

Shayne rubbed his chin. "You're not very close to Cranston?"

"Personally, no. We have completely separate private lives. But we've been in business together for ten years. Wendell is a wealthy man. He had no need to work, but he is a man who needs to keep busy, as we all are. So he took what he knew—financial matters—and joined me in Fiduciary Counsel. We have had a good relationship and have done quite well. But a nervous breakdown!"

"That's bad?" Shayne said.

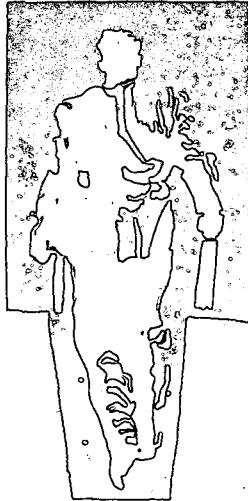
"Mr. Shayne, if you had entrusted your entire financial life into the hands of a man and then you learned he had had a mental breakdown, what would you think?"

"I'd be scared. I'd want out fast and I'd wonder about the whole company," Shayne said. "I see your problem. Do the clients know?"

"No, not yet. Damn it, Shayne, I don't know anything myself. All I know is that Wendell is missing, and that Sally, the daughter, says he's in some sanatorium. She says she doesn't know where!"

"You want me to find him, and find out how bad he is? Maybe find out why he flipped his wig?"

"That's what I want. I have to



know what's going on so that I can handle it properly. I must have something to tell his clients."

"Okay. Give me your office and home address, and Cranston's home address. You say he has a daughter. Anyone else?"

"Yes, he has a—well, fiancée. A Miss Jane Easton. I have not been able to locate her."

"Where does she live?"

"On Cranston's estate, in a cottage of her own," DeBray said somewhat stuffily as Shayne again raised an eyebrow. The cool, financial man added, "Wendell is a widower. I imagine most men need female company."

"How old is he?"

"Fifty-two. He was married young. As I said, he is a rich

man. His father was most successful."

"Are you married?"

DeBray bridled. "Of course! As I also said, Wendell and I had quite separate private lives. My wife and I have been married twenty-five years. We are most solid."

"Okay. You can pay my secretary. She'll tell you the terms. I'll let you know what I find out as soon as I find out anything."

"I'll expect to hear," DeBray said, nodded to Shayne and left.

The redhead sat back in his chair and sighed. It looked like a routine job. Not so easy, if Cranston didn't want to be located, but routine.

It wasn't routine.

II

TEN MINUTES later Lucy Hamilton left, with a severe glance of disapproval. Mike Shayne waved with a grin, and then thought about whether or not he should start on Cranston tonight.

The redhead didn't want to even move. The problem of Wendell Cranston didn't seem urgent, but, then, he had to start sometimes, and at night people are tired, too, and maybe talk more. If no one wanted to talk at all he might have a hell of a time.

He was still sitting there, smoking his second cigarette, and thinking about what to do, when

he heard the footsteps out in the corridor beyond Lucy's outer office.

Shayne listened.

They were tentative footsteps, nervous and uncertain.

Had Lucy locked the door? Probably not with Shayne still in the office.

He got up silently and glided with catlike speed to the door. His automatic was in his hand. He stood behind the door and listened again.

The nervous footsteps seemed to pace, and then his outer door opened. The footsteps entered his outer office. Shayne could picture the man: smallish, slow, looking around the empty outer office, licking his lips nervously.

Or was he wrong?

The footsteps suddenly walked swiftly to his inner door and the door opened. The intruder stopped as if startled to find the inner office also empty.

The man stepped into Shayne's line of vision—small, flabby and too heavy, in a rumpled cheap brown suit and yet with a certain conservative dress as if he had to look solider than he was. The man licked his lips as Shayne watched. The man blinked as if not sure what to do next.

Shayne saw no hint of a weapon. He pushed the door closed, and stepped out.

"Ahhhggg!" the man cried, and literally jumped as Shayne moved.

"Just hold it," Shayne said.

The small, flabby man saw the big automatic in Shayne's hand, and went chalk white. He seemed to sway and clutch for something to hold. He got only empty air and almost fell against the desk. The man held himself up on the desk.

"Okay, who are you? What do you want?" Shayne demanded.

"I—I are you Mike Shayne?"

"That's right."

"I—I want to talk to you."

"Why didn't you call out? Why sneak in?"

"I—I didn't think. I mean, I didn't sneak in. I came in, and there was no one, and—"

"Okay, sit down."

The flabby little man sat. He perched on a chair, demure and almost prim, but his face sweated and there was something about his eyes that made Shayne wonder. The man was like a nervous boy suddenly seeing his first naked woman: nervous, inexperienced but somehow determined.

Shayne went behind his desk, laid the automatic on the desk where he could get it fast. The gun seemed to draw the flabby little man's eyes like a magnet.

"What's your name?" Shayne asked again.

"Mervyn Jones," the flabby man stammered. "I—I want to know where Mr. Cranston is, and what Mr. Debray is doing."

"Where do you work for Cranston?"

"At Fiduciary Counsel. I'm an analysis clerk, have been for fifteen years. I work mostly for Mr. Cranston, as I said."

Some of Mervyn Jones's normal manner seemed to be returning. A little confidence. Some, but not much. Jones's voice still shook and he tried feebly to bluster Shayne.

"What do you think Mr. DeBray is doing?"

"I don't know. I do know that Mr. Cranston has not been in the office for a week. I want to talk to him—Mr. Cranston, that is. Did Mr. DeBray hire you to find him?"

"That's my business," the redhead said.

"I know he did," Jones said. "I don't care about that. I want to find Mr. Cranston, too. I'll pay you to tell me where Mr. Cranston is."

"I work for one client, Jones. Why do you want to know where Cranston is? Is something wrong at Fiduciary Counsel?"

Mervyn Jones stood up. "No! I just want to see Mr. Cranston. A private matter."

"Sit down, Jones, and tell me what private matter."

"Will you tell me when you find Mr. Cranston? I don't care what you tell DeBray. I just have to know, too."

"Sit down," Shayne said men-

acingly, and waved his hand at the pistol.

Jones blinked. Shayne sat back. It was a mistake.

The flabby little man moved like a snake. In a quick, convulsive dart he made the door and was gone.

Shayne didn't move. He couldn't have anyway. Jones was long gone, and the redhead heard the elevator door close. He scratched at his ear.

Maybe there was more to this than met the eye.

He got up, clapped on his panama, and strode out of the office. He locked it this time, and went down to his car.

III

SHAYNE drove up to the house of Wendell Cranston in the fading twilight. It was a magnificent house. Shayne had seen a lot of mansions in his day, but the gigantic red-brick house set in its wide green lawns was the most impressive of all.

It was in an exclusive section of Miami, not far back from the road. Behind it Shayne saw the shimmering surface of an enormous pool. Even in the twilight it was hot enough to make him wish he could strip off his clothes and dive in.

Shayne parked under the portecochere of the mammoth town house, and strode up to the front

door. The butler-type who answered his ring looked him up and down as if he had just come up out of some hole. Shayne figured he probably looked like he had, so restrained his temper.

"Miss Cranston, please."

"I'm afraid—" the butler began.

"From Mr. DeBray, if that gets me in."

"Would you wait inside, sir?" the butler said then, neither apologetic nor eager. Shayne liked the man's style—arrogant, but with consistency.

Shayne waited just inside the door. The entrance hall looked like a basketball court in size, and the floor was just as smooth and shining. It was cool in the hallway, and Shayne automatically straightened his wilted suit and tie.

The girl who hurried into the entry hall made him wish he had changed his suit entirely—and wish he were twenty years younger.

"Mr. DeBray sent you?" she said in a soft, eager voice, but one with more than a trace of worry under it, "Mr. —?"

She was a small, slender blond girl but with a full body that curved everywhere and looked like it would curl into a ball at a touch and be soft all over. Her face was delicate but stunning, and her eyes were wide and deep green.

"Shayne," he said. "Mike Shayne. I'm a private detective DeBray hired."

She was eager. "Have you found out how my father is?"

"I don't know anything about your father, Miss Cranston. I came here to find out what you know so I can get started."

"Oh," she said, and bit her very pretty lip. Then she smiled, a little weakly but with guts. "Of course, Mr. Shayne. Come into the living room. And you can call me Sally."

Shayne followed into a living room about the size of the grand ballroom on the *Queen Elizabeth*, but somehow warm and cosy. It was a neat trick, and the decorator who had done it had not come cheap. Sally Cranston turned to him.

"Sit down, Mr. Shayne."

"Make it Mike," Shayne said. He liked the girl. "Tell me about your father."

She shrugged. "What is there to tell? Daddy is rich, but he hated to be idle. He has charities, many of them, but that wasn't enough. So he worked with DeBray. As far as I knew he hasn't had a worry in my lifetime—except me, of course."

She smiled as nice a smile as Shayne had ever sighed inwardly over. "But he's missing now."

"Yes and no," Sally said. "A week ago he went out for work as usual. He never got there. I didn't know that then. The first



LUCY HAMILTON

I knew was that he didn't come home at his usual time. I wasn't alarmed at first. I assumed he was with Jane."

She looked at Shayne perfectly naturally. "Jane Easton is Dad's woman. She lives in the cottage at the other end of the estate. Dad often stayed down there with Jane. But by nine o'clock I was too worried. I called Jane. Dad wasn't there, but she said she knew where he was—he was sick and under Doctor Pilan's care."

"Who's Doctor Pilan?"

"Max Pilan, Daddy's doctor. He's been Dad's doctor for over ten years. They're friends, too. So I called him. He told me that Dad was all right but had had a nervous collapse and was in a sanatorium for a rest cure."

"What sanatorium?"

"Doctor Pilan wouldn't tell me. He said Daddy needed complete rest, and he would let me know when I could see Daddy. He said

he would give Daddy any message I wanted and that I wasn't to worry."

"But you are."

"Yes, I'm worried. Why don't he let me see Dad?"

Shayne nodded. "It's a good question. I'm not sure he can legally refuse you as Cranston's daughter. Why haven't you tried harder to make him take you to your Dad?"

"How can I? Doctor Pilan is an old friend. He assures me that Daddy is all right, but that he might be hurt by seeing me now. He even brought me a note from Daddy. It seemed awfully shaky, but it was certainly from Daddy, and he asked me to keep things going he'd be back soon."

"But you're still not satisfied?"

"Oh, I don't know. It looks all right. It's just—well, Daddy seemed so fine just the day before, and he's never had any trouble like this."

Shayne frowned. "It's damned odd they won't let you see him. You're his only daughter."

A quiet, smooth voice said; "It's not odd at all, Mr. Shayne. Sally is emotional and upset. Doctor Pilan simply feels she should wait a few weeks."

Shayne watched the woman who had come in through a side door. She was tall, full, and probably better looking than Sally Cranston, but Shayne liked the daughter better. The newcomer,

who Shayne guessed had to be Jane Easton, was a brunette with blue eyes, and had pretty obviously been listening.

"You heard it all, Miss Easton?" Shayne asked bluntly. "You are Jane Easton?"

"Of course, and, yes, I heard it all," Jane Easton said, and then she smiled a warm smile that changed Shayne's whole impression of her, and went to put her arm around Sally Cranston. "Your father is all right, dear. I saw him myself today. I won't say he's fine, because I'm afraid he isn't. But he's comfortable, and making progress."

"You saw him, Jane?" Sally cried. "Really?"

"Really and truly. Doctor Pilan thought it might be all right for me. I hope it was. Poor Wendell is quite ill, I'm afraid. He knew me, but only just. The doctors say he is coming along, though."

"Where is he, Miss Easton?"

She looked at Shayne slowly, the smile gone. "I can't tell you that, Mr. Shayne. If he can't see his daughter, surely he can't see a strange detective. I really don't understand what you're doing in all this. Wendell is simply ill. I don't see how that is anyone's business but his family's."

"He's got clients and a partner. They have a right to know what's wrong with him and when he can get back to work," Shayne said.

"Yes, they do. All they have

to do is ask Dr. Pilan," Jane Easton said.

"Gee," Sally Cranston said, "maybe that is best, Mr. Shayne. If Jane's seen him."

"You'll see him yourself soon, dear," Jane said. "And now what about a little dinner for the two of us? On me. If Mr. Shayne is finished."

"Just give me Dr. Pilan's address," Shayne said, "and I'll fade into the night."

"Of course," Jane Easton smiled. "Unless you'd care to join us, Mr. Shayne? A handsome man is always welcome to two maiden ladies."

"I'll give it some thought," Shayne said.

"You do that," Jane Easton said. "Sally is a bit young, but I like company."

Shayne got the address and left. The Easton woman was a cool one. She didn't mind flirting with her lover's daughter around. Of course, Sally seemed to be a pretty modern young girl, and he had no idea exactly what Jane Easton's relationship to Wendell Cranston was.

It was now dark, and Shayne climbed into his car. He wanted to have a small talk with DeBray, his elegant client. As he drove out of the driveway he saw a small, car hidden among the trees. He slowed. The face in the car looked out once, nervously, and vanished inside the interior.

But Shayne had quick eyes even in the dark.

Mervyn Jones.

The flabby little employee of Fiduciary Counsel, Inc. had his eyes still out for Cranston. That was something else Shayne wanted to ask DeBray about.

He got back to his office and called his client. DeBray was at his club, according to a very pleasant female voice that was not young. Shayne called the club. DeBray came on, a bit out of breath.

"Handball. Have you found him, Shayne?"

"It's not quite that easy, DeBray, or you wouldn't need me. I want to ask if you've talked to Dr. Pilan?"

"Who is Dr. Pilan?"

"Cranston's doctor. He confirms that Cranston has had a mental breakdown, needs hospitalization and no visitors. Miss Easton says she's seen Cranston, and that the Doctor is telling it like it is."

There was a silence. Then: "Can I see him?"

"No, not even his daughter can. Only, apparently, Miss Easton."

Another silence. "Does that sound right to you?"

"I don't know. Maybe, maybe not. I could get a lawyer to work on Sally Cranston about a court order. Make the doctor show him."

A third silence. "No, not yet. I'd rather know myself, be sure. I find it hard to believe that it could happen so fast, Shayne. He was fine a week or so ago, as you know."

"You want me to see what I can find out myself—get to him personally?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about an employee of yours named Mervyn Jones?"

"A good, quiet man. Nothing special. Why?"

"Are you sure you don't know of any trouble around your office?"

"No, and that's what is worrying me. Is Mervyn Jones up to something unusual?"

"I don't know. Can you tell me anything about him?"

"Almost nothing. He works mostly with Cranston. I have heard that he has a family somewhere up north he supports. He's not married."

"Any vices?"

"Not that I know."

"Okay. Sit tight. I'll see what I can find."

Shayne hung up and looked up Dr. Pilan's number. He got no answer, and no answering service. The doctor was exclusive. That made Shayne rub his jaw. But there was nothing more he could do this night.

Even a detective has to eat and sleep.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE called Dr. Pilan as soon as he came in the next morning. Lucy Hamilton had mellowed overnight, and gave the redhead a dazzling smile as he entered.

"Any calls, Angel?"

"None, Michael."

Shayne strode into his office. "See what you can find out from Gentry's office about a Mervyn Jones, works for Fiduciary Counsel, Inc. Also anything in their files on a Wendell Cranston, or Jane Easton. Tell Will I don't expect anything, but I'd appreciate a check anyway through R & I."

"Right away, Michael."

"And give me an outside line."

He tossed his panama on the hat rack and picked up the telephone. He got a frosty young female voice this time, with "doctor's nurse" written all over the cool syllables.

"Yes?"

"Dr. Pilan," Shayne snapped.

"Name, please."

"Shayne."

"Are you a regular patient, Mr. Shayne?"

"Not even irregular, honey. The doc'll want to talk to me, so don't go through the no appointment routine. Tell him I'm a detective, I'm working for Mr. DeBray and Sally Cranston, and I have some questions."

When he stopped he heard a

shocked silence. He grinned to himself in his office. He heard the telephone go on hold. He waited. It was a fair wait. Then the hold clicked off.

"Mr. Shayne?" It was a man's voice, and a careful one. "This is Dr. Pilan. Am I to understand that Mr. DeBray has made a complaint to the police?"

"Not yet. He's considering it. I'm a private detective. I want to see you—now."

"Why should I care what you want, Mr. Shayne?"

"Because what I tell DeBray is going to decide whether or not he does complain to the police."

"I see," Dr. Pilan said even more carefully. "Then, of course, I'll talk to you, won't I? I have my patient to consider first. I'll do anything to stop this foolishness before it goes farther. Shall we say half an hour?"

"I'm on my way," Shayne said.

He hung up and considered. Pilan sounded good—an honest doctor caring for his patient. But what else would he have sounded like if he had been a dishonest doc?

Shayne checked his automatic and slipped it back into its holster under his arm. Then he grabbed his panama and went out past Lucy.

"Where can I reach you, Michael?"

"I'll call in. Just hold that info from Will if it comes."



Down in his car he drove out to the address of Dr. Pilan. It proved to be a quiet house on a shaded street. This alone was unusual these days of modernistic medical centers, where various specialists shared patients, facilities and profits.

Shayne parked in a private lot and went up to the front door. Inside patients waited as patients always do—patiently. The frosty-voiced nurse looked up, and, with years of experience, sized him up at once. He hoped it was because he looked healthy.

"You're Shayne?" she snapped.

"Mr. Shayne. That's correct, sweetheart."

Anger flashed from her professional eyes, but she said no more. She stood, nodded curtly at the redhead and ushered him into a simple leather office. He sat down alone and waited. It was not a long wait.

Dr. Pilan hustled in with the air of a man who wanted to get

rid of him fast so as not to contaminate the office.

"All right, Mr. Shayne. Now what do you want me to tell you?"

"How is Wendell Cranston?"

"He is in a depressive state, under chemo-therapy. We may resort to shock-therapy, but not yet."

"Can I see his chart?"

"No, it's confidential. If you get a court order, you might force me to reveal it, but I would fight all the way. What else?"

"Can I see him?"

"No."

"What about his daughter?"

"As soon as he and I think it advisable."

Shayne stood up. "Okay. See you in court. I think a daughter will carry weight. So long, Doc."

The doctor let him get as far as the door. Then Shayne heard a sigh. "All right, Shayne. Sit down."

Shayne sat down. The doctor watched him.

"How can I make you understand that a man in Cranston's state needs quiet, peace? I'm not trying to harm his daughter. Miss Easton has seen him. I did that as the lesser of two evils, in the hope that Sally would accept her word. Sally likes Jane. I simply believe that Cranston is best quiet just now."

"Look, Doc," Shayne said. "This Cranston doesn't live in a

vacuum. He has people who depend on him. All I want to do is see him, report to DeBray, and give him your estimate of how soon Cranston will be okay."

Dr. Pilan tented his fine, long fingers and seemed to study Shayne. The doctor had deep, brown eyes that were far from stupid; Shayne was very aware of Pilan's careful manner.

"All right. I cannot give any accurate estimate of time of recovery. You know that. My opinion is that it will not be soon. As for a report to DeBray, I can have one written up by Dr. Kenege at the sanatorium. Will that do?"

"Sure. Now about my seeing him? Where is he?"

"The Cypress Sanatorium. It's located on Key Flamingo. That is a small private key this side of Key Largo. Dr. Kenege is the director. I'll give you a letter to him."

Shayne stood again. "Thanks, Doc. I'll report you had nothing to hide."

"That's good of you," Dr. Pilan said dryly. "One thing, Mr. Shayne. Be careful when you see Cranston. Treat him easily, don't stay long, and don't do anything to alarm him or make him nervous. No talk of business."

"I'll be good," Shayne said.

Outside in his car he thought for a time. Dr. Pilan seemed on the up-and-up. But Shayne couldn't forget how careful the man

seemed. Doctors were notoriously cautious, but Pilan seemed more so than most.

He knew Key Flamingo. It was not a short drive. He started the car and drove off.

He noticed the car!

It was parked casually up the street. Innocent. But not so innocent. Where it was parked Shayne could see no reason for anyone to park—no house, no store. Except that from that exact spot, no one could approach Dr. Pilan's house without being seen.

Shayne studied the car casually. It was big, dark blue, a Cadillac, and there seemed to be two men in it. Two quiet, casual men who did not seem to be doing anything.

It was not Mervyn Jones's car.

Shayne watched a moment longer. Then he saw the car start up and pull away fast. He had no chance to get its license, or move closer. He drove on, thinking.

At the first telephone booth he stopped and called Lucy Hamilton.

"Anything, Angel?"

"Nothing, Michael. Chief Gentry had his R & I man call, and they have nothing in their files on any of them, except Mr. Wendell Cranston. What they have on Mr. Cranston isn't anything, really."

"What is it?"

"He was once picked up in a raid on Marty Slotz's gambling

house. He paid a small fine and was discharged."

"That's all?"

"All right, Angel. I'm going to The Cypress Sanatorium on Key Flamingo. I'll call in about four hours."

"Yes, Michael."

He hung up and went back to his car. He turned south and headed for the expressway. Soon he was going south as fast as the law allowed.

He thought about Wendell Cranston and gambling. Well, so what? A million Floridians gambled, and most of them couldn't afford it as much as Cranston. The only faint, very faint, twinge of odor was that Cranston was in the financial business. Gambling would not sit well with financial clients.

Still, everyone had a weakness. Yet—blackmail?

Shayne thought of Mervyn Jones. Was Cranston maybe hiding out from a blackmailer?

It didn't seem likely, but he would find out, maybe, in Key Flamingo.

V

THE REDHEAD turned off the main highway, and across the smaller causeway into Key Flamingo.

It was a small place with a single sleepy main street fishing village as its center. Mike Shayne

got directions, and found the sanatorium on a bluff above the sea. It was fenced on all sides except the ocean side. A large, white building, the upper windows were barred grimly. Shayne drove up to the gate.

A slow-walking guard ambled out. "Yes, sir?"

"Mike Shayne to see Dr. Kenegé."

The guard looked at a clipboard he carried. "Right, Mr. Shayne. You're expected. Drive straight up the main building. I'll call the office and someone'll meet you."

Shayne drove up a winding drive toward the big white main building. All seemed simple and above board so far. He parked in a space in front of the big building, and walked up to the front doors. A white-suited attendant came out.

"You Shayne?"

"Me Shayne," the redhead said.

The attendant was a big, muscular type who looked about as much like a medical orderly as Sonny Liston looked like a ballet dancer. His thickened ears and flattened nose screamed pug. His small eyes, sunk in scar tissue, glared at Shayne as if he sensed dimly that he had been insulted but couldn't quite figure out how.

"Doc Kenegé says take you to his office," the pug said.

"So you take like good boy," Shayne said.

The big pug whirled. "You a wise guy, peeper?"

Shayne was big and tough, but this boy was bigger and probably a lot tougher—in his mind at least, where the light was dim.

"Me? Never," Shayne said. "How come you're working here? Didn't I see you fight Clay once?"

"Nah, I never got at that bum. They was afraid of me," the pug said. "You seen me fight? Big Bo Macek?"

"A lot of times. You was good," Shayne said.

"Yeah," the pug said almost dreamily, thinking of the good old days when he bashed for money. "They was afraid of me. Took my license."

"So you came to work for poor sick people."

"Me?" the pug blinked. "Hell, I just do special jobs. I don't work for no looneys."

What else Big Bo Macek might have said then, Mike Shayne never knew. Another character in another white suit came hurrying up from somewhere, and slid between Macek and Shayne.

The detective saw at once that this one was a different mold—the slick, smooth sharpie type. He didn't look anymore like an angel of mercy than Macek, but he was a lot slicker.

"Ah, Mr. Shayne. Don't mind old Bo here; he's really as gentle as a lamb."

"I can see that," Shayne said.

"A real Florence Nightingale."

Macek reddened. "What—"

"Quiet, Bo," the slicker said. "You understand that we have need for muscles here sometimes. I'm Murry Stiller, Dr. Kenegé's assistant. The doctor is waiting in his office."

Shayne followed Murry Stiller. For the first time he was not so sure about any of it. It was possible that Bo Macek was simply the muscle that was often needed in a sanatorium when violent cases did pop up. On the other hand, Stiller had come up pretty fast when Shayne seemed to be getting talk from the slow-witted ex-pug.

It might be something or it might be nothing.

Shayne bided his time. He continued to follow Stiller down cool corridors until they reached an obvious office area near the rear of the building.

They went into a small reception office.

Stiller spoke to a blonde in a white uniform. She didn't look much like a nurse either. There was an aura to the whole place that Shayne was beginning to wonder about.

"Wait there, please," the woman said.

Shayne waited. Stiller waited with him, silently. Bo Macek had slid silently away somewhere. Shayne wondered how far?

The place had the feel of a



barred-window joint. Every town, city and hamlet has its barred-window places. Discreet little private hideouts where those who can pay can get almost any kind of medical quackery for themselves or others—like old relatives, or even young ones, they want kept quiet for a time.

Places where you put the family skeleton, or where the drunk with large cash puts himself to dry out. A haven for the drug addict sons of the rich, or for the rich drug addict to enjoy his money in peace. Quack operations that offered to cure almost anyone of almost anything, provided the cure was hard and long, and the client had plenty of the hard cash or long green.

Was this one of those places? Shayne couldn't tell yet. The feel was edgy, a little too smooth and muscular to be legitimate, but legitimate operations often did need muscle, and were sometimes smooth.

"You may go in now, Mr. Shayne," the cool blonde said.

Shayne went in. He noticed that Stiller did not seem to go in with him, but somehow Stiller was there as the detective faced Dr. Kenoge.

"Sit down, Mr. Shayne."

Shayne stood. He studied the doctor. Kenoge was a big, swarthy man with dark black hair that grew down low on his forehead. His hands were heavy and hairy. His features were neat and even handsome, and his dark eyes were as opaque as the eyes of a professional poker player.

Once more it did not have to mean anything. Sanatorium operators often had to be poker player types; it quite often went with the work.

"I just want to see Wendell Cranston," Shayne said. "That's all. I see him, I go home and report. End of the affair."

"Yes, of course," Dr. Kenoge said. "However, it isn't quite that simple, is it? Are you a qualified medical man who can look at a patient and diagnose his condition? What do I tell him is your reason for being here, or even who you are?"

"The real reason could harm him?"

"Very much. Cranston is balanced on a knife edge, Mr. Shayne. Pressure has shaken his mind. Now a detective comes? His partner doesn't trust him? His

partner may be up to some tricks? You see? What goes on in a disturbed mind?"

"Just how disturbed is he?"

"Extremely. Yet, how can I be sure that will be as obvious to you as it is to us? After all, we're trained."

"I'm not exactly a babe in arms, Doctor," Shayne said. "I've seen a few cases like this. I ought to be able to make a decent report to go along with yours."

"Ah, I see," Dr. Kenoge said. "Well, that makes a difference, doesn't it. You are familiar with chemo-therapy?"

"A little."

"Excellent. Then you will understand what you see. Cranston came here, sent by Dr. Pilan, in a state of manic-depression. He has been calmed, and we are attempting to raise him from the depressive state with chemical treatment. But you want to see for yourself. Very well. Murry, is Mr. Cranston in his room?"

"Yes, sir," Stiller said.

"Good, then I suggest we visit him. However, I think it best that we do not reveal Mr. Shayne's actual status. Mr. Shayne, I am going to request that you don a white coat. Perhaps you can pretend to be a doctor."

"Okay," Shayne said. He could not put his finger on it, but he had a sense that the doctor was stalling. He could not say why. Everything Kenoge had said seemed

needed, pertinent, and yet the show was moving very slowly.

"Well, then," Kenege said, "I suggest we go."

"Why not?" Shayne said. "Unless you want to serve tea first."

Kenege's nostrils seemed to dilate for an instant, and anger flashed in his eyes, but he quickly recovered. Stiller seemed to be holding his breath. Shayne put a bland, innocent look on his face. Kenege smiled.

"I suppose doctors do tend to be long-winded. Of course you're anxious to get your job finished. Come."

Dr. Kenege walked out of his office and turned along a dim, cool corridor with Shayne behind him and Stiller bringing up the rear. Shayne looked for Bo Macek but the big pug was not in sight.

They went up to only the end of the corridor on the first floor—not one of the barred-window floors.

VI

DR. KENEGE went in first. Stiller and Mike Shayne waited out in the corridor. Shayne heard low voices inside the room. Then Kenege returned.

"All right, Shayne."

It was a large, bright room with a view of the ocean. There were no bars, the furniture looked like any first-class motel room, and the

only sign of the nature of the room was the hospital bed with the restraining straps clearly visible.

Wendell Cranston sat in a big armchair near the window that faced the sea. He was a thin man, handsome, with elegant gray hair carefully brushed. He sat wrapped in a dressing-gown, his hands folded neatly in his lap. His hawk face looked out toward the blue water.

"Mr. Cranston?" Shayne said.

There was no response. Dr. Kenege touched Shayne's shoulder and indicated softness. Shayne nodded. He walked slowly to Cranston. The financier didn't move.

Shayne looked down at him. He seemed serene, but it was his eyes—blank, blue, empty eyes. The look of heavy sedation, but more. There was something in those eyes that was tortured, struggling.

Even as Cranston sat there immobile and silent, a battle was waging deep inside his brain. Then Cranston seemed to become aware of Mike Shayne. His head moved faintly, a deep furrow appeared in his brow. His left foot began to fidget, tap on the floor.

Dr. Kenege said quietly, "He's reacting, Shayne. I'm afraid you disturb him."

"He knows I'm here?"

"Yes, very much. He's in a terribly disturbed state. If he wasn't

under such extremely heavy chemotherapy he might even be violent now."

"Can I talk to him?"

Kenegé frowned. "I don't think you can get through just now, but perhaps you better try to satisfy yourself."

Shayne bent a little. "Mr. Cranston? Your daughter would like to talk with you. She'd like to visit you."

Cranston showed no reaction. He just sat, his left foot tapping. Then, suddenly, his right hand came up with its fist clenched. A look of violent agony suffused Cranston's face. Shayne stepped back.

Cranston seemed to freeze like that, his fist clenched and raised, agony all across his face. Then he began to shake. He shook all over, and his mouth opened, drooled. A low moan came out, a moan of pain and anger. It seemed that Cranston was trying to speak.

"Ahhhh . . . Ggghhhh . . . No! . . . No . . . No . . . No . . ."

Cranston's face turned almost purple as he forced the single word out against terrible pressure. Stiller jumped toward him. Big Bo Macek appeared as if from nowhere. Shayne stepped back.

He watched Cranston. The handsome, gray-haired man was in the throes of a violent seizure. His face was suffused. His fists

were clenched. His mouth drooled as he tried to shout.

And yet there was something about it, something not right.

It was too perfect! Shayne had seen such seizures before, and this one was almost classic as Macek and Stiller soothed and restrained Cranston. Classic—and yet without the feet! Nothing was now happening to Cranston's feet. They had stopped tapping, were flat on the floor. They were not twisted, strained at all.

Dr. Kenegé said, "I think that's it, Shayne. Have you seen enough?"

"I think so," Shayne said, still watching Cranston.

"Then I suggest we leave."

Shayne watched another moment as Macek and Stiller seemed to have gotten Cranston under control. Then he followed Dr. Kenegé from the room.

In the corridor the doctor lit a cigarette with a shaky hand. "I never get used to it. So sudden, too. One minute a man is a perfectly normal, even above normal, man, and the next he's like that. We know so little about the human mind."

"Very little," Shayne said.

"That's why we must keep him quiet, alone, at peace until he regains himself. He must be protected against any possible disturbances."

"You don't have him guarded? No bars?"



"We did at first, but that seemed to make him worse. So we decided to try sedation and more pleasant surroundings. In general, it seems to have worked better."

"He seems calm enough to see his daughter now."

"Perhaps, and yet you saw how he reacted to just your being there. He didn't know who you were or what you were, yet he reacted quite violently. I think it was the pressure of demands and responsibilities that broke him down, Mr. Shayne, and any reminders of those demands could put him so far down we might never bring him back."

"That bad?" Shayne said.

"I'm afraid it is a possibility."

"How long would you say he's going to be out of action?"

"No way of telling. Perhaps years, perhaps weeks. It all depends on how soon we can get

through to him and relieve the pressures."

"All right. I better report to DeBray. I don't suppose you'll let DeBray see him soon?"

"No. His business is a big part of the pressure."

They had reached Dr. Kenege's office by then, and Shayne left the doctor and walked back along the corridors to the front entrance. In his car he drove out through the gate and back toward the tiny village.

Once out of sight of the sanatorium, he pulled off the road into a thick grove of palms. He left his car and started back for the sanatorium. He headed for where the high fence ended at the edge of the cliffs above the sea.

VII

WHERE THE FENCE ended was a high, sandy bluff. Mike Shayne had little trouble climbing around the end of the fence.

Inside, he kept to the beach and out of sight from the buildings as he made his way to the rear of the main building. He had noted the location of Cranston's room when he was in it, and now he crouched and watched the window.

He saw nothing for a time, and then he came alert.

A figure was standing at the window.

It was Wendell Cranston.

Shayne watched as the handsome, gray-haired man stood there looking out. Cranston was leaning on the window sill. He did not seem very disturbed. But it was too far to tell for sure. Shayne waited. After a time Cranston left the window and went back into the shadows of the room.

Shayne dropped and began to crawl toward the building. The sun beat down and he felt as exposed as a whale on a sand bar. But he was not spotted, as far as he could tell, and he reached the window of Cranston's room.

Carefully, he raised up at the corner and looked inside. At first, in the sun, he saw nothing but the empty room. Then he saw Wendell Cranston.

The handsome financial man was seated in an armchair with a small table in front of him. A glass stood on the table—a glass with ice, bubbles and a brownish liquid. A cigar rested in an ashtray.

Cranston was playing solitaire!

Shayne ducked down. Cranston was as mentally sick as he was! Maybe less. All an act for his benefit, probably with the help of some drugs. Why? Cranston was hiding out, that was clear. But why?

Shayne looked around. He saw an open window some twenty yards away. He crawled to the

window and peered in. It was some kind of storage room. He climbed in. The door was not locked. He opened it and stepped out into the corridor after making sure that it was deserted.

He stepped quietly along the corridor to the door of Cranston's room. He did not expect it to be locked. It wasn't. But he found one thing he didn't expect.

Big Bo Macek looked up at him as he stepped into the room.

"Bo!" Cranston hissed.

The tall rich man stood up knocking over the small table, the glass and the cards. Bo Macek lumbered at Mike Shayne.

Shayne watched the big man's eyes. They were as dull as ever. Macek had nothing left of his quickness, if he had ever had any quickness. But Macek still had his muscles. The big man swung twice without even thinking, by reflex and pretty fast.

Shayne slipped the left and ducked the right, and came up under with his best left and right flush on Macek's chin. The big man blinked, stepped back, and came on again, swinging wild and hard.

Shayne stepped inside the wild swings and planted a fast one-two in Macek's belly. The big man grunted and lunged to grab Shayne. The redhead ducked, slipped out of the big man's bear hug, and fell heavily.

Macek growled and aimed a

kick at Shayne. The redhead rolled, kicked out, and caught Macek on one foot, toppling him with a floor-shaking thud, his massive head cracking the floor with a sound like that of a broken egg.

Shayne was up first. Macek swallowed up, shaking his head, dazed. Shayne stepped in, and hit one—two—three—four times full on the jaw. Macek staggered, bent, knees-buckled, and went down and out.

Shayne held to the bed, breathing hard. He glared at the smooth and handsome Cranston.

"How much do you want, Shayne?" Cranston said.

Shayne breathed. "Like that? Just pay me off to keep quiet? Why, Cranston? What are you hiding out from?"

"None of your business. I'm making you an offer. I don't have to. All I have to do is press a button and you'll end up in the ocean."

"Maybe," Shayne snarled, "but maybe not. What's your game, Cranston? What's so important you're willing to worry your daughter, desert your clients, and maybe ruin your partner."

"It's no game, shamus, and it's private," Cranston snapped. "It's none of DeBray's damned business. He can handle the affairs of my sheep as well as I can. He should consider himself lucky. He'll make more money without

me. Now, name your price, or do I whistle up my dogs?"

"Are they any better than Macek?" Shayne sneered.

Cranston looked at the sleeping pug. "No better, but a lot more of them. Come on, Shayne. You work for money. Just accept that I have my reasons for all this, and name your figure. You owe nothing to DeBray, and if you think you do, I assure you that I am involved in nothing that will harm DeBray."

"Then you won't be hurt if I tell him all about it."

"I would rather you told no one. That happens to be somewhat important."

"Not even Mervyn Jones?" Shayne asked, watching Cranston.

"Who?" Cranston said, frowning in obvious puzzlement. Then he laughed. "Mervyn? Good grief, Shayne, what the devil would little Mervyn have to do with this?"

"He's looking for you."

"Mervyn? What in heavens name for?"

"I thought you could tell me."

"Well I can't. It's probably some all-important client needs urgent advice on what savings bank to deposit her fortune of five thousand dollars in."

The sneer was clear in Cranston's voice. Shayne found himself wondering about the man. Cranston seemed to have little re-

gard for a business he had gone into when he didn't have to. The handsome man acted as if only big money interested him.

"How about if I tell a couple of boys in a big Cadillac?" Shayne said.

He got his reaction. Cranston paled, stiffened. His cold eyes were fixed on Shayne's face. Then Shayne saw the faint twitch of his jaw muscles, and quickly glanced at Cranston's hand. Cranston had given a signal.

"That was dangerous," Shayne said. "I might become violent."

"I don't know what you mean," Cranston said. "I'm offering to pay you for your silence. I don't have to, but I prefer—"

Shayne grinned wolfishly. "Don't try to con me, Cranston. That's been tried by experts. I don't know what your trouble is, but I've got a client who wants to know, and if you don't tell me I'll find out. Believe me."

"I believe you, Shayne." Cranston said.

Shayne heard the running feet far down the corridor, because he had been listening for them. Cranston backed against a wall, his hand snaking for his pillow.

Shayne didn't wait. He closed his eyes, covered his face, and went through the closed window.

He landed hard in the sand on his right shoulder, rolled and came up running.

A shot cracked the day behind

him. He weaved, ran, and tumbled down a sloping dune. He raised up and looked back. Cranston was at the window, yelling. A back door opened and men in white suits poured out. Murry Stiller led them.

Shayne dropped down and ran for the fence in the shelter of the dunes. He made it before his pursuers came into sight, scrambled around the fence and up, and ran for his car.

He reached his car and was driving off before the first of his pursuers came in sight through the front gate.

VIII

SHAYNE reached Miami again just before dark. He went straight to his office. There he got out his file on the barred-window boys. He read it fast but carefully, smoking hard, as he read. He found no entry for Dr. Kenege or The Cypress Sanatorium. That did not surprise him too much. His files were not as up-to-date as he would have liked, and the barred-window practitioners had a way for changing names pretty rapidly.

He picked up the telephone and dialed. He whistled between his teeth as he waited. A man's voice came on.

"Midland Agency."

"Who's this?" Shayne snapped.

"Who do you want?"

"Johnny Adams."

"Hold the line."

Shayne whistled some more.

"Adams, who's this?"

"Hello, Johnny. Mike Shayne. Are you going to be in your office a while?"

"Hey, Mike baby! Sure. What's the pitch?"

"How's your barred-window list?"

"The best in town. We keep up close. You want a look?"

"That's it."

"I'm waiting. Bring a glass."

Shayne grinned and headed out again. He went down and drove the few blocks to The Midland Detective Agency. Johnny Adams was waiting in his office with a bottle, two glasses, and a thick file.

"It's indexed," Adams said, pouring the good cognac he knew Shayne liked.

Shayne picked up the file, and didn't say "when" to the cognac. Johnny Adams gave him his glass with a grin.

"Who's your boy?"

"A Dr. Kenege at The Cypress Sanatorium on Key Flamingo."

Adams drank. "Kenege? It rings some kind of bell, Mike. I never heard of The Cypress place, but there used to be a joint on Key Flamingo. Some kind of hideout for thugs in the old days."

Shayne flipped pages. "Yeah, I've got it. But it was closed down fifteen years ago. It sounds like



the same buildings, but a whole different set-up. No mention of Kenege."

"No, there wouldn't be. What's in my mind wasn't connected with a barred-window caper. Drink on. I'll be back."

Adams left his office and Shayne drank on. The redhead went through the book of barred-window practitioners again, but came up blank. No one sounded like anyone at The Cypress Sanatorium.

Johnny Adams came back. "I thought so, Mike. Your Dr. Kenege was picked up about seven years ago on a hot ice charge. He was operating a funny house in New Orleans then, but that seems to have been legit."

"Stolen jewelry?"

"Yeah. Seems someone fingered him for a fence, but the New Orleans cops couldn't find

anything in his place on a raid. They tore the joint apart, it seems, but it all came out sweet. They had to retract and publicly apologize. He threatened to sue and all that. Damaged reputation. The report says they watched him for a long time, but no dice."

Shayne tugged an ear. "It's pretty funny, Johnny. If he's a real doctor, and his set-ups are legit, why would he bother with a risky caper like fencing hot stones? I wouldn't figure there was enough involved in it."

"It does sound dumb. Of course, there are guys who always want an extra buck, especially if they can steal it instead of working for it. A funny-farm could be a hell of a good place: a lot of people in and out; guards; nuts everywhere; lots of stuff shipped in; a big inventory of material to hide stuff around."

"And no one notices strange comings and goings. The police are wary about handling such a place. Tons of visitors, hard to check on," Shayne said. "But I still think fencing hot jewels is a peanuts operation for a smart doc."

"Well, maybe it was a bum rap," Johnny Adams said.

"Maybe," Shayne agreed, "and thanks for the brandy, Johnny."

"My pleasure. Any chance of filling me in? I'm still the curious type after all the years of gumshoeing."

"I don't know enough, Johnny. But I'll let you know how it all comes out."

"Okay, Mike," Adams said. "Do that."

Shayne went back to his car. He lit a cigarette. Men were involved in mistaken charges all the time. But he didn't have just any man. He had Dr. Kenege, a man once arrested for a jewel charge, and who was now clearly involved with some game being played by Wendell Cranston. It was what you call scientific evidence: one fact was meaningless, but two on the same man was something else again.

He started up and drove off to the house of his client, DeBray. There was light in the house. He parked and strode up to the door. He rang. After a time a woman came to the door.

"Yes?"

"Mr. DeBray, please. Mike Shayne."

She was a neat, trim, well-kept woman with graying hair and an aristocratic manner. She had been smiling. Now she stopped.

"I see. Mr. Shayne, yes," she said. "Well—"

DeBray appeared behind her. "I'll take care of it, dear."

Mrs. DeBray retired gracefully, and DeBray motioned Shayne through a doorway into what was clearly a home office. Shayne went in with his gray eyes narrowed. Something was wrong. He

watched DeBray close the door, and turn to face him.

"I came to report," Shayne said.

DeBray nodded, lighted a cigar. "Yes. That won't be necessary now. Just send me your bill and we'll consider the matter closed."

"Just like that?"

DeBray blew smoke. "I don't know what you mean, Shayne. I hired you, I don't need you anymore, so I'm ending the job. I don't find that unusual."

"I do," Shayne said. "You haven't heard my report, which means that you don't have to hear it. And that means Cranston's contacted you, or someone has, and you're now in on whatever it is with Cranston."

"Don't be a fool!" DeBray snapped. "I hired you to locate Wendell and find out what was wrong. You did that. Wendell called me, and I'm now satisfied."

"I'm not. What did he tell you?"

"That, Shayne, is not your business."

"Anytime I get attacked, threatened and chased, it becomes my business. Cranston acted like a man who wanted me nice and quiet if he had to bury me to do it. I want to know why."

"Don't be ridiculous!" DeBray said. "Wendell called me. He told me he was all right, he had his reasons, I should carry on alone.

He said you became abusive and he had to have you ejected."

"Alone?" Shayne said. "You mean he's handled all his profits over to you, right? Double the money with no more investment."

"My reasons are none of your business. You did your job, you found Wendell and he contacted me. Now I don't want you around any more. Send me a bill."

Shayne watched DeBray. "Has he cut you in on whatever the deal is? Be careful, DeBray."

"Get out of here! Now!"

Shayne left. What else could he do? DeBray had a right to fire him, and, at the moment, he didn't have even a hint as to what it was all about. There was nothing he could do, unless he could get someone else to hire him.

Not that he was going to quit now, legal or not, but a client would help. He thought of Sally Cranston. He stopped at a bar and called the daughter. There was no answer. He tried Jane Easton. There was no answer at that number either. The Easton woman was undoubtedly in on whatever was going on anyway.

He considered Mervyn Jones, but he did not have a number for the flabby man, and there were too many Joneses in the book. Of course, in a way Mervyn was a client already. Shayne thought about that as he drove to his apartment-hotel and parked in the

garage under the building.

He could do nothing now, and he was tired. He rode up in the elevator to his floor, and stepped out, still thinking about DeBray. What the devil was Cranston up to?

He sensed the sudden movement at the end of his corridor before he saw it.

His hand darted for his automatic, and he whirled in the same instant it came out, his body tensed in a low crouch, the gun aimed and steady.

IX

THE FIGURE SEEMED to freeze in the shadows of the end of the corridor.

"Mr. Shayne?"

A woman's voice. Mike Shayne straightened up warily. The woman stepped carefully into the light. Jane Easton.

"The gun isn't really necessary," Jane Easton said.

"That's your opinion," Shayne said. "What do you want with me, Miss Easton?"

"Jane," she smiled. "I want to talk to you."

"Okay," Shayne said, and unlocked his door.

He bowed the tall, full woman into his apartment. Her blue eyes were quiet, but there was some trouble in them. She brushed back her dark hair as she sat down while Shayne went and got his

cognac. He looked at Jane Easton.

"A small one," she said.

He poured a small one for her and four fingers for himself. Then he sat facing her.

"Okay, shoot," he said.

"You've seen Wendell, I take it?"

"Yes. I saw the act, and I saw the truth," Shayne said, watching her.

She sighed. "Yes, I understand. What do you intend to do?"

"I've been fired by DeBray. It looks like I do nothing."

Now she watched him. A thin smile played on her full lips. "Somehow, I don't think you're a man who gives up on a case just because he's told to give up."

"I can't help what you believe."

"Do you know why Wendell is playing his game?"

"No. Do you?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid not. Oh, I know he's hiding, but I don't know why, unless—"

Shayne took the bait. "Unless what?"

"A man came to call on me. He said he was looking for Wendell, and that he knew all about it."

"All about what?"

"He only hinted, he never said."

"What kind of man?"

"Small, flabby, sort of—"

"Mervyn Jones," Shayne said grimly. "He didn't give you any idea what it's all about?"

"I didn't say that, Shayne," Jane said. "I said he never said what he knew all about. But he hinted. He asked me about my bracelet. He said did I know where it really came from, and why Wendell had really given it to me."

"What bracelet?" Mike Shayne snapped, very much alert.

"A large diamond, ruby and emerald bracelet Wendell gave me as a kind of joke."

"Joke?"

"Yes. You see, it's fake. Oh, it's a good fake. Worth maybe two hundred dollars. Wendell gave it to me, with other stuff, for a costume ball we went to a year ago. He said he wanted to shock his old biddy clients by making them think he made so much on their accounts he could deck me out like a duchess. Later, he let me keep the bracelet."

"A fake," Shayne said.

"Of course. I wear it around all the time. It looks good."

"And Jones knew about it and was interested in it?"

"He seemed to be, but I can't figure why."

Shayne frowned. "Have you ever seen any other jewels that Cranston had?"

"You mean real ones? No, Wendell isn't much for jewelry," Jane Easton said.



"What do you know about Dr. Kenoge and Dr. Pilan?"

"Nothing, why? I mean, they're doctors."

"Yeah," Shayne said. "Is this what you came to talk to me about?"

She nodded. "About this little guy. I'm worried about Wendell."

"Okay, I'll look into it. Give me a dollar."

"A dollar?"

"You're hiring me."

"Well now. What am I hiring you for?"

Shayne grinned. "Just give me the dollar and go home."

She laughed. She gave Shayne the dollar and left. The redhead

sat and sipped his brandy. Mervyn Jones again. But what about the two men in the Cadillac? Wendell Cranston had not seemed concerned about Jones at all, but he had been very concerned about the men in the Cadillac.

Shayne stood up and put on his coat again. He checked his automatic and called DeBray. His ex-client was not pleased to hear from him, but he reluctantly gave Shayne the address of Mervyn Jones. Shayne hung up—and heard the noise.

Someone was out in the corridor again.

A slower, heavier step than Jane Easton's step. A man moving very carefully. The man stopped outside Mike Shayne's door. There was a silence. The man was listening. Shayne made some noise, a yawn, a clink of glass.

He listened. The footsteps moved away toward the rear stairs. Shayne slipped to the door. He opened it softly, and looked out. The corridor was empty. But he sensed someone around the corner near the elevators.

He drew his automatic, closed his door loud enough to be heard, and strode down the corridor making no attempt to be quiet. As he reached the end, and the cross-corridor corner in front of the elevators, he jumped around, facing down the cross-corridor with his automatic out.

The slim, swarthy man who stood there reacted with amazing speed and calm. While Shayne was still jumping to face him, the man kicked out and sent Shayne's automatic flying. Shayne grabbed for him.

The man ducked and aimed a hard kick at Shayne's groin. The redhead blocked, slammed a hard left and right into the man's belly. The man gagged and doubled over.

Shayne moved in. The stairs-door at the end of the cross-corridor suddenly opened.

The shot exploded like a blow in the narrow corridor, and the bullet kicked off the wall inches from Shayne.

The redhead dived for the cover of the main corridor.

But no other shot came.

He looked around the corner again. The cross-corridor was empty. He sprinted to the stairs door. It was locked inside. Shayne rubbed at his jaw. They had not been amateurs, whoever they were, and he had a pretty good idea.

The two men in the Cadillac.

Not amateurs, armed, quick in reflex to attack—and Cranston had been worried about them.

X

THE ADDRESS OF Mervyn Jones turned out to be a small, quiet cottage in a complex of cottages in

a cheap section of the city. Mike Shayne parked up the block from the complex after cruising slowly past.

He walked along the dark street, looking sharp, but there were no people on the street, not even a car in sight. He reached the complex of cottages. Some were still alight, and he heard the low murmur of conversation and television sets.

Someone laughed somewhere, and a woman's voice whined in weak protest.

Jones's cottage was the fourth back from the street, and it was dark. Shayne scouted it. He heard no sound inside and could see little through the windows. He went to the front door and tried it. It was open.

He moved inside lightly. He listened. There was no sound in the room, no movement or that feeling that anyone was in the room.

Shayne closed the door and waited for his eyes to adjust to the interior dark.

It was a neat, sparse, Spartan room of the type you'd expect a quiet, steady, unimaginative clerk to have. Everything was clean and in place. Shayne couldn't see a single item to indicate that Jones ever relaxed and let things go.

He crossed to the bedroom and looked in. It was the same story. A plain bed, hard and immaculate. Two dressers with bare tops,

and not a speck of litter on them. Shayne went through the drawers in the dim light. He found nothing at all, everything absolutely neat.

He went back out into the living room and found his first evidence. In a drawer of the small desk, neatly wrapped in rubber bands, he found a sheaf of losing tickets from the race track, and a record of what looked like losses at some gambling house.

Mervyn Jones was gambling!

And from the look of it, losing. The neat little clerk was so careful he kept his losing tickets for a record! Tickets most men would have torn angrily and thrown away. A meticulous man, Mervyn Jones.

Thinking about what this could mean, Shayne went over the rest of the living room. He found nothing more of interest. Not until he took one look into a small-sized den.

There he found Mervyn Jones.

It was a small den, and on the couch was a man face down with a knife protruding. He gently turned the body over and Mervyn Jones stared up at him from dead, puzzled eyes.

Jones had been stabbed twice in the heart.

He looked the den over and found nothing. He touched the dead clerk and found him still faintly warm. Dead only a few hours, maybe less.

Shayne went out and called Chief Will Gentry. Then he sat

down to wait for the police. Mervyn Jones had wanted to find Cranston, and had been interested in a fake bracelet. Now Jones was dead. Shayne had a lot to think about while he waited to report to Will Gentry.

XI

NEXT MORNING Mike Shayne awakened to the ringing of the telephone. He groped groggily for the receiver. It had taken him a few hours to fill Chief Gentry in on the case. It was Gentry on the phone now.

"No dice, Mike," the bluff Chief growled. "We went down to The Cypress Sanatorium, but they've all got alibis."

"How good, Will?" Shayne asked his old friend.

"Air tight, if you take their word for each other. Stiller and Dr. Kenege swear Cranston never left his room last night. The big pug and four other people swear Stiller and Kenege never left. It goes on like that. You can't prove it or disprove it."

"How about the others?"

"The daughter has no alibi. She was out driving around most of the time. Jane Easton was at dinner, alone, and then was out waiting for you, she says."

"She was here when I got home," Shayne admitted.

"And DeBray was home with his wife—he says."

"I saw him there, but it's a pretty short drive either way," Shayne said.

"So it's situation normal. We don't know why Jones was killed, or who did it, and until we do know why he was killed we won't know who did it. Unless we can find some clues. You have any clues, Mike?"

"Not at the moment," Shayne said, but he was thinking of a fake bracelet and a rich man in hiding. "Anything on my two shadows in the Cadillac?"

"Nothing. No local hoods fit the descriptions, and no one's spotted them yet. But we're looking. I've got the word out to my pigeons. Maybe they'll hear about two out-of-town hard boys."

"Maybe," Shayne said.

He hung up then, and lay in bed thinking. His gray eyes were hard points, steel and grim, as he thought.

Mervyn Jones had wanted to find Wendell Cranston. Now he was dead.

Shayne had a hunch two other men were looking for Cranston. Had they reached Jones and silenced him for some reason? Was Cranston next? And how did a fake bracelet fit in?

Shayne jumped out of bed. He put on a pot of coffee and dressed while it dripped. He had a glass of orange juice and two cups of coffee. He was hungry, but that could wait for now. He checked

his gun, slipped it into his holster, and went down to the garage.

He drove out to the mansion of Wendell Cranston. He did not drive to the door of the big house, but passed by along a private road to the smaller house at the far end of the estate. The cottage where Jane Easton lived.

He parked and walked to the front door of the cottage. There was no answer to his first ring. He listened. He heard no sound in the house.

He rang again, and far off he heard a door close. Footsteps approached.

"Well, hello," Jane Easton said, rubbing sleepy eyes. "This is a nice way for a girl to wake up. Come in."

Shayne walked in. His gray eyes followed the woman as she led him toward the rear. She was wearing only a pale green house coat, and when she passed in front of sunlight it was pretty clear that that was all she was wearing.

In a sunny breakfast room she sat down and smiled. "I hope this is a social call?"

"So do I, but our hopes are dashed," Shayne said. "Maybe later."

"Later is so far away," she said. "I always like now much better."

"Where were you last night, Jane?"

"Like that? Too bad. I told the police where I was. Mostly I was waiting for you."



"And where was Cranston?"

"At the sanatorium as far as I know, Mike."

Shayne began to pace the breakfast room as she watched him, her eyes neutral. The redhead's gray eyes were pin-points as he paced.

"Jones knew something," Shayne said at last, facing her. "He knew something important enough to be killed for. Whatever it was he knew had something to do with that bracelet of yours."

"But how? What could be important about a phony bracelet?"

"Nothing," Shayne agreed, "but a real bracelet like that could be damned important."

She watched him. "Real? Don't you think I'd know if it was real?"

"I don't know, Jane. Maybe someone fooled you. If Cranston

told you it was fake maybe you wouldn't check. Just a very good piece of costume jewelry, right? Or maybe you would know. Maybe you do know, Jane."

"You think it's real and I know it?"

"Someone killed Mervyn Jones for a reason."

"I see," she said, watching him. "All right."

She stood up, letting the house coat swing and gap open to show as fine a pair of legs and thighs Mike Shayne had seen in a long time. He made an instant mental note to spend more time with Jane Easton after this was over—if she were around.

She walked out of the breakfast room. Shayne stood and waited. He stood at the windows looking out toward the big mansion. The large house seemed quiet, deserted, and yet he was sure he saw some movement at a rear upstairs window as if someone were watching the cottage.

Jane Easton returned. She carried a large, flat box. She opened it and handed it to Shayne.

"Check it," she said quietly.

Shayne looked at the bracelet. It was a magnificent piece. Shayne knew at once that the setting was real gold, but he had no way of telling about the stones. Jane had said it was a good fake, so the setting would probably be real in any case.

"I'll check it out," Shayne

agreed. "Don't go anywhere. This is a murder case now, and Chief Gentry takes a hard view of murder-case people leaving town."

"I'm not likely to go anywhere, Mike. I'll be right here in case you want me."

Shayne let his gray eyes meet hers for a moment, and then he turned and left. As he got into his car, he glanced quickly at the upstairs window of the big house where he had seen movement. Someone was still watching.

He drove back to his office. But he did not go up. Instead he went to the third floor of a building two doors down Flagler Street, and walked into a small office. A pale, thin, balding old man looked up at him.

"Michael, how are you? Long time."

"Hello, Jake. Got ten minutes?"

"For you, Michael, all the time in the world."

Jake Gibbs was a jewel merchant and appraiser, and one of the few really good diamond cutters in Miami. Shayne had saved his life and business once, and Jake was a good friend. The redhead took out the bracelet and laid it in front of Gibbs.

"So?" Gibbs said, and picked up the bracelet gently, almost reverently. "What do you want, Michael?"

"How much is it worth?"

Jake Gibbs nodded, and examined the glittering bracelet

closely. Gibbs handled jewels with the care of a man who loved both the jewels and his work. Not for the value of the stones, but for their beauty.

"Ah?" Jake Gibbs said as he studied the beautiful bracelet.

He took out his loupe, fitted it into his eye, and began to pore over each blood-red ruby, deep-green emerald, and sparkling diamond. He worked slowly, carefully, examining each single stone with care. Then he nodded slowly, laid the bracelet down, and slipped his loupe back into his pocket.

"Maybe two hundred dollars, maybe a little more," Gibbs said. "The setting is gold, Michael, but the stones are fake. Good fakes, the best, but fakes. Is that what you wanted?"

"I don't know what I wanted, Gibbs," Shayne admitted. "But thanks anyway. Send me a bill."

"Not to you, Michael."

"Send the bill, Jake. You have to live. I'll manage to charge it to someone."

He left Gibbs and walked down the stairs—slowly. He was thinking hard. So the bracelet really was a phony. Then why had Mervyn Jones been killed? Jones had been interested in the bracelet, but the bracelet wasn't real. It did not make any sense.

Shayne was not sure just what sense it would have made if the bracelet had been real, but with

the bracelet fake it seemed to make no sense at all.

Or did it? Dr. Kenegé had once been involved in something connected with stolen jewels.

Shayne decided it was time to pay the good Doctor Kenegé another visit. He went up to his office to leave the bracelet. As he walked in he saw the fear in Lucy Hamilton's eyes.

He whirled and reached for his automatic.

He was too late.

XII

THEY STOOD BEHIND him in his outer office. The thin, swarthy man he had tangled with in the corridor of his apartment-hotel, and a short, broad man with a crude face but quick brown eyes that told Mike Shayne the broad man was not as crude-brained as he looked.

"Just be nice, peeper," the broad one said.

"What do you want?" Shayne said coldly.

"Easy, peeper, nice and easy. I'll get around to that. Now, you and the lady just wander inside to your private office and we'll have a private talk."

"No," Shayne said.

The thin, swarthy one said, "Let me work him, Pete."

"Shut up, Joey!" the broad one named Pete said. "Listen, Shayne, I don't want no trouble with you."

But if I got to work the lady over, I guess I will."

Shayne watched them. It was clear that the thin, swarthy one was hot to avenge his beating at Shayne's hands. Joey, since that seemed to be his name, was the weak link in the team now. Shayne decided to play Joey.

"Okay, we talk," he said. "Just keep that goon over there away from her."

Joey scowled. "You better keep me away from you, peeper."

"Not me, Joey. Women are your speed."

Joey purpled angrily. "Why you dirty —"

"Shut up, Joe!" Pete said. "Inside, Shayne. Fast."

Shayne and Lucy marched into the private office. The two hoods came behind them, and Pete closed the door. He motioned to Joey to stand at the door. Joey nodded, and Shayne laughed.

"That's it, goon. Be a good dog."

Joey rounded on him. But Pete intervened angrily.

"The door, Joey. Lay off him, Shayne."

"I always like to finish what I start," Shayne said, staring at Joey. "If you hadn't stuck your nose in I'd have taken Joey apart."

"I said shut up!" Pete snarled.

Shayne shrugged, but his eyes continued to watch Joey and he had a thin smile on his face. He sat in a straight chair, with Lucy

Hamilton beside him in another chair. Pete straddled the corner of his desk.

"Okay, now all we want to know is where's Cranston?" Pete said.

"Why? What do you want with Cranston?"

"I'm asking the questions," Pete said. "But I don't figure it'll hurt to tell you he ain't all he's supposed to be. We want him, and he ain't no loss to nobody. It's strictly a private deal."

"About the hot ice?" Shayne said quickly.

Pete blinked and Joey at the door jumped. Pete waved Joey back, and his cool brown eyes watched Mike Shayne.

"What do you know about the stones, Shayne?"

Joey cried, "He knows, Pete! Let's finish both of them!"

"Shut up! I ain't telling you again!" Pete cried, and turned back to Shayne. "What do you think you know, Shayne? Fast!"

"I know enough. I know about the stones, about Cranston being in the racket, and Dr. Kenege. The Cypress Sanatorium is the cover, right?"

"Kenege?" Joey said. "Who's Kenege?"

"A doctor," Shayne said, "and that's what you'll need bad if I get my hands on you again."

It was too much for Joey. With a cry of rage the thin hood lunged toward Shayne. Shayne jumped



up. Then Pete made his big mistake—he automatically stepped in to restrain Joey and turned his back on Mike Shayne for a split second.

"Out!" Shayne shouted to Lucy. Then he was on top of both hoods. With a powerful blow to the back of the neck he knocked Pete into Joey. Joey staggered, clawing for his gun, and Pete went down as if dead from the solid blow. Shayne closed in on Joey before he could get his gun, chopped a short right and left to the swarthy hood's chin.

Joey was hurled backward against the wall, fell forward as if trying to hold onto the air, and Shayne met his jaw with a single powerful right. Joey's head snapped back. He hit the wall again and this time slid down and out.

Shayne whirled just in time to catch Pete groping for his gun. Shayne kicked Pete under the chin. The crude-faced hood

flopped over, grunting. Joey was already groaning awake.

Shayne ran for his door and out. He went down the stairs fast. He wasn't going to wait for any elevator. In the lobby of the building he met Lucy Hamilton running back with two policemen.

"Elevator!" Shayne snapped.

The four of them hurried into the elevator and rode up. Shayne checked the corridor as they arrived on his floor. It was empty. Guns out, Shayne and the two policemen moved warily down the corridor with Lucy resolute behind them.

There was no need. The office outer door stood open. Inside was no sign of Pete and Joey. Whether they had had help, or Pete had simply dragged Joey off, Shayne didn't know. The mess in the office was clear enough, and the two patrolmen took down Shayne's descriptions of the two hoods.

"You better report those to Chief Gentry right away," Shayne said. "He's already looking for those two boys."

"Right away, Mr. Shayne," one patrolman said.

After the police had gone, Shayne got his spare automatic and checked it over grimly.

"Lock the door this time, Angel," he said to Lucy Hamilton. "I don't think they'll be back, but if anyone legitimate comes they'll knock."

"Where are you going, Michael?"

"The Cypress Sanatorium," Shayne said.

On his way down to his car the detective was thinking hard again. Pete and Joey had acted as if they had never heard of Dr. Kenoge and The Cypress Sanatorium. And if they hadn't, maybe he, Shayne, had told them too much.

XIII

MIKE SHAYNE turned off the main highway and drove along the sleepy evening street of Key Flamingo. He curved out of the little village and up past the gate of The Cypress Sanatorium to where he had parked earlier in the trees.

He made his way back to the high dune where the fence ended, and scrambled around. Hidden, he worked up to the rear of the main sanatorium building. Nothing and no one moved around the building in the late sun.

He crawled carefully up to the window of Cranston's room again, and raised up to peer inside. Two men were in the room!

He ducked down. They were Pete and Joey!

More carefully, Shayne raised up again and watched the two hoods. Joey was standing in the center of the room. The swarthy gunman looked highly nervous.

Pete was bent down over

something. In the evening light Shayne could not see what Pete was doing at first inside the dark room. Then he saw.

A man lay on the floor, and Shayne did not need a doctor to tell him that the man on the floor was dead.

It was Wendell Cranston.

Even as Shayne watched, Pete stood up and seemed to stare down at Cranston for a long minute. Then the broad hood said something to Joey. The thin one nodded eagerly, his face almost pale with fear. The two of them headed for the door.

Shayne ducked down and hurried to the same open window he had used previously. He slipped through into the storeroom, and out into the corridor. He saw no one. The whole building was oddly silent. He hurried carefully to the door of Cranston's room. Far down the corridor he saw Pete and Joey just vanishing.

He hesitated, and then decided that he had to look at Cranston first. Maybe the financier wasn't dead. He went into the pleasant room. Cranston was still there where he had seen him. Shayne bent down.

Cranston was dead.

The handsome man wasn't handsome anymore. He had been shot twice in the head at close range by a small caliber pistol—maybe a .22-long. The wounds were small but deadly, and the

gun had been almost pressed against Cranston's skull when it was fired.

Shayne stood up and looked down at the dead man. Whatever Cranston had been hiding from had found him. Shayne didn't think it had much to do with financial counselling.

He made a slow search of the room, and found nothing. Then he made the grisly search of the dead body. In Cranston's right hand pocket he found an ugly, snub Colt Agent .38 Special. He sniffed the little two-inch barrel. The gun had not been fired, and it was fully loaded with its six shots.

In an inner pocket of the dead man's jacket he found a small diamond pendant necklace on a thin gold chain.

Shayne held the pendant. It was worth a small fortune. And he had a pretty good hunch that it wasn't American made. The setting was antique, and the chain also. He studied it for some time, and then he slipped it into his pocket.

Just in time. Heavy footsteps came along the corridor outside. Mike Shayne looked around. He spotted a closet. He slipped inside, leaving a small crack open. He drew his automatic and waited.

The door was flung open, and the heavy footsteps stopped short inside the door. The door was not closed. Shayne waited. Then he

heard the heavy movements, and Bo Macek came into his line of vision through the crack in the door.

Shayne watched the big pug stare down at Cranston, then bend and search the dead man's pockets. Macek slowly stood up again as if he was surprised at not finding something. Shayne had a pretty good idea what it was Macek had expected to find—the pendant he had in his pocket.

The big man's face was a study in puzzlement and the agonized attempt to think with his dull brain. No one else came in, and the sanitorium was still strangely silent. Macek must have stood there a full three minutes. Then the big man suddenly moved away toward the door.

Shayne waited. Macek did not even bother to close the door as he hurried out into the corridor. Shayne went after him. He peered out and saw Macek walking fast away along the corridor. He went after the big man silently, but Macek was not even thinking about anyone being behind him. The big man did not look around once.

Shayne followed along three corridors until Macek turned in through a door. Shayne stepped silently to the door. He listened. Inside he heard the noise of something heavy being moved. He opened the door cautiously with his automatic in his hand.

He stepped silently into a large storeroom. Macek was out of sight, banging boxes. The whole room was piled with medical supplies on shelves, and boxes of various drugs Mike Shayne had never heard of. One thing struck him as he looked around the dim room lines with shelves—many of the boxes he saw had come from abroad.

Shayne slipped silently through the room toward the sound of Macek banging boxes. He did not have to be silent. The big attendant was making so much noise he wouldn't have heard an army coming up on him.

Shayne stood in the shadows of the room and watched the big pug.

Macek was taking empty boxes from rows of shelves where they were stored. They were wooden boxes, solid, and probably were returned to the companies that shipped drugs and other medical supplies in them. Macek was pulling them down and breaking them up.

Shayne soon saw that there was a lot of pattern in Macek's strange actions. First, he took down only boxes that had the names of foreign shippers on them. Second, he was not tearing them up haphazardly—he was carefully pulling apart the side walls with a claw hammer, and then prying up a bottom board with a screw driver.

Each wooden case had two thick

boards at the bottom, not one, and Macek was prying up the inner board in each case. Shayne saw him pry up two such boards, look at the top of the bottom board, then hurl the dismembered crate away.

Macek was looking for something that he expected to find *between* the two bottom boards of the crates!

Shayne stepped out of the shadows. This time Macek heard him. The big man turned slowly.

"Just stand where you are, Bo," Shayne said quietly, his automatic pointed.

Macek whitened and his big hands shook. "Don't point that at me! You hear?!"

It was obvious that Macek was afraid of guns. Shayne lowered the automatic a hair.

"All right, Bo. I don't want to hurt you," Shayne said quietly, "but I will if I have to. This gun is cocked and ready."

Macek nodded, watching the gun, a cold sweat all over his big, battered face.

"Did you kill Cranston?" Shayne asked.

"No!" Macek cried. "Why would I kill the boss? He was a good guy. *They* killed him! I seen them! I know they killed him, and they took the necklace he was gonna give his woman."

"Who are they, Bo?"

"The other end guys. Gulick's boys. They been after the boss

'cause he was gonna cut them out."

Shayne stepped up and picked up one of the boxes Macek had ripped apart. The bottom board was hollowed out into a shallow depression. With the top of the two bottom boards over it, it formed a small, hidden space in which something could be placed. What? Shayne suddenly had a pretty good idea.

"So when you found Cranston dead," Shayne said, "you came to see if there was any of the merchandise still hidden."

"Yeah, sure, why not? I mean, the boss is dead. I got a right to a share."

"Smuggling," Shayne said. "Cranston had jewels, maybe other stuff like heroin, smuggled in inside these medical supply boxes. Inside the boxes themselves."

"It was a hell of a smart scheme," Macek said, admiringly.

"Real smart," Shayne said, "but why would a man like Cranston run such a scheme? A rich man."

Macek laughed. "How you think the boss got rich? He wasn't rich. His old man left him dough but he lost it all, one way or another. But he had contacts overseas, see? He teamed up with Doc Kenege and Doc Pilan and started this business. It sure paid nice."

And Fiduciary Counsel, Inc. was a hell of a good respectable cover for a supposed rich man, Shayne thought.



"Where are Kenege and the others now?"

"They run out soon as they spotted Gulick's boys. We knowed Gulick was after us. That's why the boss was hiding out here. The crumbs just ran. I come to see how the boss was. They killed him! Gulick's boys! I'll kill them!"

"No, Bo, you won't kill anyone," Shayne said quietly.

He herded the big man out of the tell-tale storeroom and to the front desk of the now deserted sanatorium. They had all run like sheep once the boss was dead. And Gulick's boys, Pete and Joey, had run too. It was up to Will Gentry now.

Shayne dialed Gentry's number, and told him to contact the State Troopers and the local police. Shayne would wait with Bo Macek and the dead Wendell Cranston.

"Who killed Mervyn Jones, Macek?" Shayne asked after he

had hung up and they were waiting for the law to descend.

Macek blinked. "Jones? I don't know no Jones."

Shayne watched the big pug. He believed him. Macek didn't have the brains to fake his innocence. It looked like Mervyn Jones had simply stepped in where he didn't know what he was stepping into.

The sirens of the police sounded only moments later.

XIV

WILL GENTRY sat in his big office chewing on his perennial cigar. The Chief seemed tired, and Mike Shayne sat waiting for his old friend to speak.

"So that's it. Wendell Cranston really didn't have a dime except what he made from smuggling—but that was a lot of dimes. It looks like he smuggled almost everything, you name it. But he specialized in hot jewels from almost every country. It looks like he had worked with Dr. Kenege for a long time."

"Any word yet on Kenege or Pilan?"

"Pilan was picked up an hour ago. I think we've got Kenege and Stiller pinned down. Pilan is talking, so we'll pick up the small fry later."

"And the two hoods?"

Gentry flipped a folder. "Pilan says they are Joey DiNapoli and

Pete Dee. He says they work for an international character named Mingo Gulick. We know about Gulick. He's got fingers in a lot of pies. We'll know more when we find Joe and Pete."

"If you find them, Will. They looked like they were going to move far and fast the last I saw of them."

"We'll find them. When we do they'll talk. I know the type. The way it figures is that Cranston's been working with Gulick a lot of years, and he tried to go it alone this last year. He held out on Gulick, and no one holds out on Gulick."

"So his goons knocked off Cranston. What about Mervyn Jones?"

"He was just looking for Cranston, too, and Joey and Pete didn't want any complications," Gentry said. "You read it any other way?"

"I guess not, Will," Shayne said. "Only Cranston was hiding pretty good, and was pretty well protected. There's some other little things I didn't like, and I'm not sure why Joey and Pete would have bothered to kill Jones."

"Unless he knew something wrong," Gentry said. "And it seems like he knew something, Mike."

"It does," Shayne agreed. "Okay, Will, it's your show now. I'll report to my ex-client and new client and see Cranston's daughter, too. You've told her?"

"Yeah, we told her. But I hear

she's a doll, and she might like her hand held," Gentry said, and then grinned. "Or was it the bereaved sweetheart you had in mind for the hand-holding?"

"I'm giving it some thought," Shayne said. "I'll keep in touch, Will."

Outside, Mike Shayne stood for a time in thought. Then he sighed, and went down to his car. He drove across the city in the night toward the house of DeBray. The house was dark when he got there. He rang the bell anyway. There was no answer.

Frowning, Mike Shayne went back to his car.

He drove on to the big mansion of the dead Wendell Cranston. There were plenty of lights on here. He parked and went to the front door. The butler answered, and was sure that Miss Sally wanted to talk to anyone.

"But if you'll wait here, sir, I'll see."

"I'll wait," Shayne said.

He waited, looking around the mammoth living room once more. He could almost sense Wendell Cranston's problem. Born with money, losing it one way and another, and with no real training in making any more. A name and a reputation. But that did not bring in enough money.

So Cranston had become a criminal, a smuggler of who knew what?

A good way to make a lot of

money without work if one had the contacts, and it looked like Cranston had had the contacts. And who could say what made a man become a criminal—a criminal of Cranston's type? Contempt for society? Need for the quick, fast clever buck? A need to feel smarter than other people, to outwit them?

"Mr. Shayne?"

He turned. Sally Cranston stood there, looking as beautiful as ever, but there were dark grief circles around her young eyes.

"I'm sorry, Sally," Shayne said.

"Yes," she said, and she blinked. "It isn't true, is it? What they told me about Daddy? It couldn't be true. We always had money. We're rich, you see? Daddy didn't even have to work at all."

"He had money once, maybe before you were born. He needed to have money. It happens to a lot of men."

She seemed to nod. "Money? Yes, he really needed to have money."

"Don't take it so hard."

"Hard? All my life I've been living on stolen money? All I have, my education, my friends, my so-called position, based on a lie?"

"Don't judge him," Shayne said harshly. "You don't have the right."

She looked at Mike Shayne, blinked, and then burst into tears.

She sat down on a couch and sobbed into her hands. Shayne did not move. It looked real enough. He started toward her when he sensed the movement in the doorway and saw DeBray standing there.

"I'd say you've done enough. I told you to stop looking for trouble, to stay out of the affair!" DeBray said. "Not you, no. You had to go on and you probably got Wendell killed! You led those killers to him!"

Shayne didn't say anything. For all he knew it could be true. He had told Joey and Pete about Kenege and The Cypress Sanatorium.

"Are you pleased? Did you come here for your blood pay?" DeBray went on.

"I didn't make Cranston into a criminal, DeBray," Shayne said quietly. "And you set me on his trail."

"How did I know then what he was doing? If he'd taken me into his confidence—"

"What would you have done, DeBray? Joined him? Maybe it was the loot you wanted, the set-up. Maybe you knew about it all along, and hired me just to get to Cranston yourself."

DeBray turned gray. "You filthy—"

"Where were you today?"

"At my office!"

"After that?"

"I went—" DeBray stopped.

"None of your damned business, Shayne."

"Why did you try to call me off, DeBray? When you came to me you wanted to find Cranston bad. I found him. Then you wanted me to lay off just as bad. Why? What happened?"

DeBray folded his arms. "I don't have to tell you anything, and if the police want to talk to me, they can see my lawyer."

Sally Cranston looked up. She turned her gaze from Shayne to DeBray and back again. She seemed puzzled, confused. Slowly, she stood up.

"Lawyers? What are you talking about?"

"Easy, my dear," DeBray said.

Sally looked at Shayne. "You're asking questions? About my father. Is—is there some question to ask? About how he died? About who killed him!?"

Her voice had slowly risen in pitch and volume until the last words were said in almost a scream that seemed to echo through the big mansion.

DeBray hurried to her to calm her down. He tried to put his arm around her shoulder, soothing her, but she threw his arm off.

"No! No! What happened to my father? You're all lying! He wasn't a criminal! It's all a trick!"

DeBray tried to reason with the girl. Shayne started toward her. He had no hint of anything dangerous until the two men were al-

ready in the room, a shaking Jane Easton held between them.

XV

PETER DEE, a heavy Luger ugly in his thick hand, cried out, "Everyone nice and calm."

Joey DiNapoli held to Jane Easton, and waved a big S&W 357 Magnum at Mike Shayne. "This time, peeper, you ain't gonna be so lucky."

"Knock it off, Joey. I've told you!" Pete Dee growled. "Shayne suckered us once because you let him get you stupid mad. Not again, or Gulick hears. You got me?"

Shayne watched and it was clear that Joey got it this time. The swarthy goon seemed to have a healthy fear of Gulick.

"I expected you two to be half-way to Siberia by now," Shayne said.

"Expect again, Shayne," Pete said. "You're a smart operator. I got nothing against you. You got a job just like we got jobs. Okay, only we ain't finished our job. Cranston got his, swell, but we ain't got the merchandise. We come for it."

"What merchandise, Dee?"

Joey snapped. "He knows us, Pete!"

"Yeah, I figured that. Like I said, Shayne's a smart man. So okay, he knows us. That ain't so bad. It means the cops are onto

us, but we've had cops after us before. We'll make the meet okay. All we want is the merchandise."

Pete stopped, and looked around at them all.

Dee spoke to Shayne. "Gulick sent us to get Cranston and the stuff. Cranston's dead. Now we want the stuff. We know it ain't at The Cypress place. So what did Cranston do with it?"

Pete looked around at all of them again. Sally Cranston was standing paralyzed, staring at the two goons; unable to move, almost without breathing as if the truth of her father's life was wrapped up in the ugly persons of the two hoods.

DeBray was pale, sweating, his eyes fixed on the two big guns that looked like cannons in the hands of Pete and Joey.

Jane Easton was standing quietly, barely breathing, her face impassive but her eyes watching Mike Shayne's face as if for a signal. There was a cool, bright glitter to her deep eyes. Shayne realized that she was alert and ready to move.

Pete sighed. "Come on, people. Me and Joey got no call to hurt anyone. Gulick and Cranston had a deal. Cranston tried to play games. He's dead. But a half million dollars in smuggled hot merchandise is still missing. That I want. Now it figures he don't trust his pals, no. He gives it to his legit friends, see? So I figure one

of you got it stashed, or you knows where it is."

They were silent.

Sally Cranston whispered: "You killed my father."

Pete looked at her. "Remember it, Miss. You know where it is, you better tell."

Shayne said, "Don't be stupid, Dee. Cranston was playing a big front, legit all the way. He wouldn't have given the stuff to anyone outside his group. It's Kenege or Pilan you want. And you won't get to them now."

"Don't con me, Shayne," Pete Dee said. "We looked over the Cypress place, and we saw those jokers run out. They wasn't carrying no loot, believe me."

"So they had it hidden," Shayne said.

"So? Where? They run far and fast. No, it's around, Shayne. I got the feeling. Gulick wants that stuff, and he's gonna get it if I got to take everyone in this room apart piece by piece. And don't count on the cops. They ain't looking for us here. We got all the time in the world."

DeBray mopped sweat from his pale brow. "I don't know anything, you hear? I never even knew Wendell was involved in anything illegal! I only found out about —"

Pete Dee snapped out, "You found out what Cranston was up to, and you called Mike Shayne off. I heard, mister. So why did

you call him off? Maybe Cranston cut you in, huh? That'd be smart. Cut in a new man Gulick and us never heard about, and stash the merchandise with him. Yeah, that's what I'd do."

DeBray seemed to sway, his face a mask of fear. "No! No, he never did! I didn't know! I swear that —"

"Don't pass out, mister. We'll just bring you round and work on you. But no hurry. We got time like I said." Pete Dee grinned around, and his glance rested on Jane Easton. He stared at the beautiful woman for a full minute.

"Now, the lady there interests me, right? I hear tell she got a bracelet from Cranston. I figure he gives her a bracelet, maybe he gives her all the rest of the merchandise, huh? What about it, lady?"

"Drop dead, punk," Jane Easton said. "You may scare these lilies, but two creeps like you don't scare me."

Joey snarled, "Maybe we can fix that, lady. I got ways you maybe never heard about. I can maybe scare you."

"Try," Jane said staunchly, but Shayne saw the whiteness at the corners of her mouth.

She was right. Face them down, and maybe they would hesitate just a fraction because they weren't sure their methods would work. The one thing punks like



them looked for was fear and weakness.

"You're off base on the bracelet, Pete," Shayne said. "It's a fake, a phony piece."

"So you say," Pete Dee said.

"So I know. I had it looked over, Pete. In fact, I've got it in my pocket. I went to leave it at my office, but you two were there, and I forgot it. You want to see it?"

"Show us," Pete said.

"Slow," Joey said. "Reach in real slow, and bring it out real easy."

Shayne reached into his pocket and brought out the bracelet. He brought it out slowly, and held it high and away from him. Pete nodded to Joey. The swarthy punk came and took it. He handed it over to Pete. The boss gunman studied it—carefully, as if he knew what he was doing, and he probably did. Pete swore.

"It's fake all right," he said, and flung the bracelet from him. "Joey, see if maybe Shayne's pulling a fast one. Search him."

Shayne raised his arms. He suddenly remembered the pendant! He still had it in his pocket, too! Joey came up to him, patted, looked him in the eyes, and took out the pendant.

"Like this, Pete?" Joey sneered.

"Hand it over," Pete said. "That piece I remember."

Pete grabbed it eagerly. Joey watched him.

It was the moment!

Jane Easton saw it before Mike Shayne did.

Jane hurled herself at Joey's unaware back; at the back of the thin gunman's legs. She hit him solid just behind the knees. His knees buckled helplessly and he fell hard against Pete Dee. Grabbing for a hold, Joey dropped the heavy 357 Magnum. Pete staggered.

Shayne was on both of them. He slugged Pete flush on the nose and felt the nose break and spurt blood as Pete screamed.

DeBray came alive long enough to dive for the 357 Magnum.

Joey staggered up. Jane Easton, on the floor, kicked out with her fine legs; her thighs bare all the way, and Joey tripped over her legs and sprawled face down, smashing up against a table leg.

Shayne smashed Pete again . . . again . . . again . . .

The broad goon was a hard man. He staggered, bled, but did not go down, and all the while he fought to get a shot with his Luger.

He squeezed off one wild shot that smashed something across the room.

Shayne hit him twice more—from the heels.

Pete went down, still struggling. He had not managed a single punch but he was still fighting. He tried once more with the pistol. Shayne kicked it from his hand across the whole room.

Jane Easton crawled wildly for it and got it. She came up with it in her hand.

For one brief second the mammoth living room froze in a shivering tableau: Sally Cranston, mouth open; DeBray, holding the 357 Magnum with no idea what to do with it; Jane Easton, with the Luger, and an idea what to do with it; Shayne breathing hard; Joey on the floor, sitting up holding his head; Pete down and moaning with the pain of his broken nose and paralyzed wrist.

Shayne moved and took the magnum from DeBray. "Okay, boys, that's the end."

He went to the telephone. He called Gentry. "Hello, Will. I've got them. Dee and DiNapoli. Come and pick them up. You can fry them for breakfast."

Shayne hung up and looked at the two hoods.

Pete Dee wiped the blood from his face, and there was sudden fear in his hard eyes.

"No, Shayne, we didn't kill Cranston!"

"He was dead when we got there," Joey cried.

"How about Mervyn Jones?"

"We never heard of him," Joey whined.

Shayne laughed. "I believe you. Sure, I do! You're finished, boys, and so is the case."

The two hoods were still protesting when Gentry and his men arrived in a wail of sirens. The gruff Chief of Police had them herded out, collected the weapons, and sent everyone else home.

When he and Shayne were alone at last, he said: "Nice work, Mike. That's the end. They'll talk, and maybe we'll get Gulick, too. Only I'm not too optimistic about that. Gulick's out of my beat. But you wrapped it up."

Shayne nodded slowly. "Yeah, I wrapped it up. With some help. You need me any more, Will?"

"No. You going somewhere?"

"Maybe. I'll see you."

Will Gentry watched the redhead as he left.

XVI

THE NIGHT WAS dark on the estate of the late Wendell Cranston. In the big house the only light was in Sally Cranston's upstairs bedroom, where Jane Easton was calming the distraught girl.

DeBray was still in the house, drinking himself insensible in the study.

The police had gone. They had

not left a man; there was no need with the case wrapped up. Joey and Pete were already in jail, and the D.A. was at work drawing up the case.

From the shadows near the cottage of Jane Easton a tall, heavy shadow detached itself and slipped up to the cottage. A beam of moonlight fell on the shadow. It was Mike Shayne. At the cottage he slipped quietly around and found the rear door was not locked.

Inside the cottage he stood immobile and listened. The dark rooms were all silent. When his eyes were accustomed to the dark, the redhead glided through the rooms until he found a kind of study.

He began to search. He tried all the drawers, under all the chairs, along the walls. He upended tables, and he looked behind the pictures. He lifted lamps and rolled back the rug. He found nothing.

He moved through the rooms again, and went up the stairs to the second floor where he found the bedroom. It was a soft, sensual bedroom; feminine but far from frilly. Jane Easton was a woman who liked being a woman but who was not coy about it. The mammoth double bed dominated the room.

Shayne considered. He looked slowly around, and then his gray eyes fell on a large painting. It

did not blend with the rest of the room, and it seemed to be hung with no visible means of support. He went to it and tested. It swung away from the wall revealing a small safe behind it.

The redhead's eyes glittered. He studied the safe. It was a good safe, but not too good. He reached into his pocket and brought out a flat black box. Lucy Hamilton had delivered it to him on the dark road less than fifteen minutes before he entered the cottage. Now he opened it and went to work.

He kneaded a small ball of plastic material, and formed it into strips which he placed around the edge of the safe door. He stuck a small cap into the putty-like explosive, and stepped back with two wires in his hand. He took a breath, and touched the wires to a small battery.

The muffled explosion shook the room. He hurried to the safe. The door swung open. He reached in and came out with a sheaf of papers and a large, flat box. He dropped the papers, and opened the box.

The gleaming bracelet sparkled up at him.

It was identical to the bracelet now in Gentry's hands as evidence. Except that Mike Shayne was pretty sure there was one very important difference.

"So you figured it out," Jane Easton said quietly.

Shayne turned with the bracelet

in his big hands. She was standing in the doorway. She held a small, short-barreled pistol. Even in the darkness Shayne guessed that it was a small, cheap Iver Johnson Cadet, an 8-shot gun, .22 caliber.

"Yeah, I figured it out. Is that the gun you killed him with?" the redhead asked.

"How many guns does one girl have, Shayne?"

He nodded. "Yeah. One gun. How many knives? It was a knife you used on Mervyn Jones."

"Quieter," Jane Easton said calmly. "The flabby little man was easy. He'd seen me with the real bracelet. He'd found out I'd had a copy made, and he was going to blackmail Wendell into a payoff. The stupid little fool."

"He didn't know that Cranston knew nothing about the fake you'd had made, right?" Shayne said. "No one knew that you were out to keep the real bracelet and maybe the rest of Cranston's hi-jacked merchandise Joey and Pete wanted."

"No one knew," Jane Easton said quietly. "It seemed so easy. I knew Gulick was out to kill Wendell, and why shouldn't I have the profit? I was the only one who knew where it is, and Wendell trusted me all the way."

"A natural idea, to steal it all."

"I was tired of Wendell. He was an old man, I wanted some younger blood, some real men for a change. Only you had to get

into the act. How did you figure it, Mike?"

"Three reasons, mainly," Shayne said, his eyes alert and sharp as he spoke casually. He knew she would shoot before he could get his gun out, or get out through a window, but she had been very close to Cranston when she killed him, and maybe she wasn't a good shot with the cheap pistol.

He kept his voice quiet. "First, I couldn't really figure why Joey and Pete would kill Mervyn Jones. It didn't seem like a logical move.

"Second, the killer was very close to Cranston. I really couldn't see him letting them get that close with his own gun still tucked away in his pocket.

"Third, the gun was a small .22 caliber. That's not the kind of gun hoods like Pete and Joey carry. They carry big guns; it makes them feel good.

"When I put it all together, I got to thinking about that bracelet, and how eager you were to tell me about it. You almost made me think it was real, and then it turned out to be fake. I mean, I wondered why Mervyn Jones had to die for a fake bracelet. It made no sense."

Jane Easton listened to it all, and nodded wearily. "You're too smart for me, Mike. Too bad. Unless we can make a deal? Why not, you know? I've got a lot of

money, I need protection, and I need a man. How about it—share my loot, and me."

"A nice offer, Jane, but I'd never know who you might decide to share your loot, and yourself, with next, would I?"

She nodded. "I guess not, and I see your point. But maybe the risk is better than dying here?"

"I don't figure you could trust me now anyway," Shayne said, tensing his muscles, ready. "Not now that you know I have some doubts."

"Right again. I couldn't, could I? Well—"

A door slammed below. Lights went on. A voice called: "Jane? Where are you?"

It was Sally Cranston. Jane hesitated a split second. Shayne leaped.

Her first shot smashed the window behind him.

Her second shot caught him in the left arm, high. The tiny bullet didn't even slow him down.

She got off no third shot. He hit her once on the chin and she went over backwards in a sprawl of skirts and lace underwear and slim, smooth thigh.

He was still looking down at her, the small Iver Johnson in his

big hand, when Sally Cranston came up the stairs. Sally stared at the fallen woman. Her wide eyes looked at Shayne.

"Mr. Shayne?" she asked.

"Yeah," he said, "she killed them both. For the loot."

Then he went to the telephone and called Will Gentry for the last time.

The next day Chief Gentry's men found all the merchandise Wendell Cranston had tried to hold out from Gulick. Jane Easton told them where it was—in the basement of the cottage.

"She figured that Pete and Joey would get the blame, and she was almost right," Gentry said.

"They usually are almost right," Shayne said.

"DeBray says he called you off because after you found that Cranston was faking, Cranston called him, told him the story, and offered money. DeBray was greedy."

"Like everyone," Shayne said. "Did you pick up Kenege and the others?"

"All on ice. Only Gulick, and Interpol is working on him."

Mike Shayne nodded, and the big redhead sighed. In a way he had liked Jane Easton a lot.

ANOTHER MIKE SHAYNE CAPER NEXT MONTH

High Priest of Murder, he was, and even the worst of Chicago's mad dog killers accepted his word as law. That was Johnny Torrio, who had the face of an ascetic monk, the morals of a crazed alley cat, the soul of a depraved assassin. With Johnny, the name of the game was Death, and he played it to the bloody hilt. Meet Chicago's very worst hood:

JOHNNY TORRIO: CHICAGO'S MOST FEARED MURDER MONSTER

by DAVID MAZROFF

THE ANALOGIES OFTEN used to describe a master criminal fail completely to bring forth the full mischief and havoc he creates. A phrase which may be aptly applied to Johnny Torrio, whether it be trite or not, is that of a jungle cat on the prowl, silent and deadly. An animal that clawed, ripped, and tore its victim to shreds. Yet physically he belied this description.

He was a man who looked as if he had lived in a cell on crusts and porridge and spent all his days in telling his beads. In a

monk's hood and robe he would have been just such a figure as you associate with incense, altar candles, and cloistered devotions. If, instead of passing the time of day with you casually when you met him, he had recited a pater-noster or intoned a Latin litany you would hardly have been surprised.

The monastic pallor of his face with its dark, burning eyes was of the type that devout old masters with loving hands touched into the religious pageantries of their canvasses. You saw such

A TRUE CRIME STORY of the Man Who Made Al Capone



rapt visages in time-mellowed paintings in Uffizi and Vatican galleries.

But Johnny Torrio was a devil. He was calm, suave, poised, far-seeing, unscrupulous, a corrupter, a man who catered to the lowest instincts and passions of his fellowmen, a white-slaver, willing to order the executions of a hundred men and do it with no more concern than if he were ordering dinner in one of the many luxurious restaurants which he frequented.

Torrio was born in Italy in 1887 and was brought to America when he was a small child. He grew up in the seething, swarming Italian quarter of New York's lower East Side, and when he was old enough he joined the Five Points Gang, then ruled by Paul Kelly, a notorious thug.

He subsequently rose to become Kelly's lieutenant—not by virtue of his ability to fight or kill but rather because of his intelligence. Gang wars were frequent and Torrio was in the midst of them.

Battles against Big Jack Zelig, Chick Tricker, and Jack Sirocco were almost a daily occurrence. So were the wars against Owney Madden and the Gophers. Early in 1911, Terrible Johnny Torrio, as he now was known, appeared along the East River waterfront, in the old Fourth Ward, and as chieftain of the James street gang

terrorized a large area for almost five years.

He was said to have had a part in framing the plot which resulted in the murder of Herman Rosenthal, Broadway gambler, a crime which rocked New York and sent Police Lieutenant Charles Becker to the electric chair along with four small-time hoodlums colorfully named Gyp the Blood, Dago Frank, Whitey Lewis, and Lefty Louis.

He was the predecessor of men like Santos Volpe, Vito Genovese, Lucky Luciano, Jack "Legs" Diamond, Joe Adonis, and Frank Costello. He was the brains behind a hundred or more robberies of banks, bank messengers carrying fortunes in bonds, truck loads of merchandise, burglaries, dope traffic, and every other kind of illicit enterprise where he could make a buck.

It was natural that he should make many enemies. Things got too hot for him with the law and the underworld and he sold out his interests, tied up with the Five Points Gang again and planned their criminal enterprises. At this time there was a tough young thug named Al Brown in the gang. He was born Alphonse Caponi and later became internationally infamous as Al Capone. Torrio never forgot him.

By 1915, things once more got hot for Torrio, more so with the underworld than with the police,

and he knew he was marked for death. He telephoned an aunt in Chicago, a sister of his mother named Victoria Morosco, who had married Big Jim Colosimo when both were poor—Victoria selling flowers and shoe laces in the streets and Big Jim sweeping them.

"I need your help, Victoria," Torrio said. "I cannot stay in New York any longer. It is bad for me. I want to come to Chicago. Your husband is doing well. I could be useful to him. Ask him if he will hire me."

"It is done, Johnny," Victoria replied quickly. "You are the son of my beloved sister. I have no children. You will be like my son. Do not worry. Come at once."

They were fateful words, because they were destined to change the lives of a thousand men and women, the face of a city, and the vital economy of a nation. All this in three little words:

Come at once.

Torrio came to Chicago in the autumn of 1915, a mild-mannered young man of twenty-eight, impassive, cold, death lurking behind the dark eyes.

Chicago was raw in the year 1915, despite the aristocratic Gold Coast which ribboned Lake Michigan on the North Side of the city. It was a clanging, trumpeting, ugly city, grime-soaked, smoke-clouded, the stench from the

stockyards polluting the West Side and a large part of the Loop.

It was an eager city with a lyric passion in its struggle to become a figure of respectability. It fought a losing battle against the row upon row of saloons, whorehouses, nightclubs, honkytonks, and other deadfalls, vile, odorous little worlds of noise and bedlam.

The city had risen boldly and courageously from the pyre where it had been cremated in those four scorching and horror-filled days of October, 1871. It had returned from the dead and it was shouting its return in raucous tones, joyous and slightly bewildered over the fact that death hadn't won. It roared mightily and asked the world to come view the miracle of its resurrection.

The world came—great men and small, builders of industry and commerce, stock market and grain market manipulators, merchants and bankers, clerks, carpetbaggers, gamblers, bookmakers, whores and madams, pimps, gunmen, gangsters and killers.

On the South Side, in the First Ward, an Italian neighborhood, known as The Levee, Big Jim Colosimo was boss. Here were the famed houses of ill-fame of Minna and Ada Everleigh, surely the most sumptuous house in all of America's history with sound-proof rooms, an even dozen of them decorated in separate distinct motifs such as the Silver

Room, Gold, Oriental, Chinese, Moorish, Egyptian, Japanese, and Roman. There were gold spittoons, beds inlaid with marble, a gold piano in the music room, excellent paintings, expensive rugs, objets d'art.

There were the lesser houses of Vic Shaw, Aimee Leslie, French Emma Duval, Black May, and the houses of Big Jim Colosimo over which Victoria ruled as acknowledged queen.

Johnny Torrio was to dethrone her. This in payment for her affection, for her sponsorship, for a loyalty he ill deserved.

Beyond the whorehouses, honkytonks, dance halls, a half mile to the north, was the Loop, the heart of Chicago.

Within that area were the living parts which fought to overcome the stench of the Levee. Here was the great rail center, grain exchange, financial district, beautiful library, tremendous business houses. This was the crossroads of the nation, where the city and farm, the ranches, mines, oilfield, and the timberlands got together, where raw materials were turned into huge stockpiles of manufactured goods, all of it flowing like never-ending tides to all points of the compass.

Here great men worked to build Chicago, to take it forward to its expedition to greatness. One man, a small, slight man with no soul and no conscience held it

back for twenty years and bathed it with blood.

Big Jim Colosimo greeted Johnny Torrio enthusiastically when he came into his restaurant at Wabash and 22nd Street.

"Ah, my boy, my nephew!" He embraced Torrio. "I am happy to have you with me. Victoria, your aunt, has told me all about you. Sit down, my boy. *Te piace bere un vaso di vino?*

"*Certo. Che me piace.*"

Colosimo smiled broadly. "It is good. You have not forgotten your mother tongue."

"I am Italian. I am proud of it."

It was the overstatement of the century. This man evinced pride in a nationality which had produced men like Puccini, Verdi, Caruso, Garibaldi, Michaelangelo among a thousand or more others and sullied their names. But he was in the company of his kind and Big Jim beamed at his nephew.

Wine was brought to the table. While they drank Colosimo outlined his need for a strong lieutenant, one whom he could trust.

"I'm the boss of the First Ward, Johnny. I bring in the Italian votes. I see to it that the Italians in my district have food and coal. Clothing if they need it. Rent. If they are in trouble I go to the councilmen, my good friends Mr. Mike Kenna and Mr. John Coughlin. They fix things. These are

poor people. They need a friend. I am that friend." He spread his hands. "The saying, Johnny. One hand washes the other. Yes? You have heard it?"

Torrio nodded his head.

"I have four houses. Forty, fifty girls work in them. Two of the houses are only dollar joints. The other two are two dollars. But—" he smiled broadly—"when business is bad in the two dollar house and good in the dollar house I move the girls. Good business, yes, Johnny?"

A faint smile broke the corners of Johnny Torrio's mouth.

IN THE NEXT two years Torrio eliminated all competition from Colosimo. He added half a dozen more houses to the string of brothels, opened up several book joints, a couple of saloons. Colosimo was elated with his nephew.

And then State's Attorney Wayman, badgered by the decent elements of Chicago to rid the city of the Levee, began a series of raids. He shut down the houses of Minna and Ada Everleigh, Vic Shaw, Black May, and all the others, including Colosimo's.

The girls were driven into the streets, solicited from taverns, hotel lobbies, distributed cards with their names and telephone numbers to taxi drivers, bell hops, bartenders and waiters. Police raided the houses constantly, chased the girls from one locality to another.



JOHNNY TORRIO

It hurt their business because no one could keep track of them. Into this situation stepped Johnny Patton, "the boy mayor of Burnham."

"Bring your women and gambling to Burnham," Patton told Torrio. "I'll give you all the protection you need."

Burnham was a small industrial town situated on the Indiana line, a few miles from Chicago. Torrio jumped at the opportunity.

"Nobody operates without my approval," he told Patton. "I'll collect your end. In that way nobody can put the finger on you but me, and I hate stoolies."

"Good. You're the man."

Operators flocked to Torrio when word got out that he was the man to see. Jake Adler, Harry Cussick, whose brother Jack Guzik was to become the bag-man for Torrio and Al Capone, Ike Bloom, and Mike de Pike Heitler, a piece of human scum, were among those who sought approval from Torrio.

"I'll supply the girls," Torrio said. "And the legal services."

"What legal services?" Heitler asked. "We're paying off for protection!"

"Token raids. Has to be done from time to time. That will satisfy all the church people. We'll have a big splash in the papers about it. Every time there's an arrest there'll have to be lawyers."

"How much?" Ike Bloom asked.

"Two dollars a week from each girl."

"That's robbery!" Heitler retorted.

Torrio's eyes narrowed. "I don't like that kind of talk. Just call it security. Yes. Security. I like that much better."

Overnight, Burnham was turned from a sleepy, peaceful village into a seething hotbed of saloons, gambling houses, dance halls, evil resorts of one kind and another. Orgies were the order of the day and of the night.

The town was wide open. The lid was off.

Drunken brawls were fought with monotonous regularity. Men

were beaten, stabbed, and shot. Women were assaulted. There were daylight and night robberies, screechings of whores, the wild shouts of men stupored by drink.

The town became a hideous pot of filth. But the money rolled in. Patton was getting rich and didn't give a damn what went on. Colosimo was getting rich. And Torrio was getting ideas.

At this time, Big Jim Colosimo met a beautiful young singer who was brought to his restaurant by Arthur Fabri, a violinist in the orchestra at the cafe. Big Jim fell madly in love with her at first sight. Dale Winter was different from any other woman he had ever seen.

"I'd like to work for you, Mr. Colosimo," Dale Winter said, "but I'm a rather shy person and I'm afraid this may not be the place for me."

Colosimo took both her hands in his. "Ah, my dear, you have nothing to fear. Nothing. No one will dare harm you, say one word to you that will upset you. I will protect you. With my life, I will protect you."

He did. He watched over her like a tiger protecting its cub. She was so soft, delicate, innocent, helpless, so out of place in an environment completely alien to her, to her nature, personality and experience. She knew almost from the first moment that Colosimo was in love with her. She at first

was only grateful to him for the help he gave her, and then she genuinely fell in love with him too.

She was an instant success at the club. Too good and too much for the goons, gunmen, hoods, killers and their women. Colosimo saw this. He saw more when Dale urged him to redecorate the place, take down the paintings of naked women from the walls, the garish decor. He changed the restaurant completely with Dale Winter's help.

Instead of the raging ragtime with its honkytonk discordancy there was a string quartet, a piano soloist, a violin virtuoso. Old gold and dawn grey were the basis of the mural renovations. The lighting was soft, and waiters who didn't look like apes moved silently and efficiently among the guests. An excellent chef and equally excellent staff took charge of the kitchen and dining room.

And the frosting on the cake was the singing of Dale Winter, whose rich soprano entranced the guests. Torrio watched the transformation of the restaurant and Colosimo and knew the time had arrived.

The goons, gunmen, robbers and thieves disappeared from the cafe. In their place came celebrities—Galli-Curci, Tito Schipa, Florenz Ziegfeld Julian Eltinge, Morris Gest, George White, Maestro Giacomo Spadoni of the Chi-

cago Opera ballet, George M. Cohan, Maxine Elliott, John Barrymore, high officials of Chicago, judges, the governor of Illinois, women of society, debutantes, bankers.

They had discovered a genuinely fine restaurant, a wonderful young singer, and a genial host, big, handsome Jim Colosimo.

Victoria spoke to her nephew. "I know what Jim is doing. It's that girl. I gave him fifteen years of my life. I worked in his damned houses, argued with the girls, fought with the cops. Okay. He wants that little bitch, he can have her. But I'm getting mine. I'm going to keep all the houses in Burnham, and I want a big slice of that restaurant."

"Sure, Victoria. You're entitled to it. I don't think Jim will argue too much, no matter what you ask him for."

Colosimo was delighted when Torrio told him that Victoria would give him a divorce, and the terms on which she would give it to him. Sure, why not? He was glad to get rid of her. She had been Victoria Colosimo for fifteen years. It was enough for any woman—any woman but Dale, that is. Besides, Victoria was too fat, too coarse, too offensive, always with the bad jokes. She would make Dale sick.

On March 3, 1920, Rocco de Stefano, Colosimo's lawyer, filed suit for divorce in Jim's behalf,

charging Victoria with desertion. They had been living apart for two years. The decree was granted. The following month Jim and Dale went to West Baden, Indiana, and were married there on April 16.

And that was when Johnny Torrio brought in Al Brown, a broad-shouldered, scar-faced hoodlum who had terrorized the neighborhood around the Bowery in which the notorious Five Points gang operated.

Torrio brought his protege to Colosimo. "This is your new bodyguard, Jim. His name's Al Brown. Italiano."

"Al Brown. Italian."

"My name's Capone, Mr. Colosimo. Alphonse Capone."

"So call yourself Alphonse Capone. That's a good Italian name."

Capone smiled: "You can call me Al, Mr. Colosimo."

"Okay, Al. You protect me good, Al. I just got married to a beautiful girl and I got a lot to live for. Johnny will take care of your salary." He returned to Torrio. "Treat him good, Johnny."

"Sure, Jim. Don't worry about a thing."

After they left the restaurant, Torrio said, "Well, that's all that stands between us and millions, Al. When you take him out we own it all, lock, stock, and barrel."

"What about Victoria?" Al Capone asked.

Torrio waved a hand in a careless gesture. "Nothing to it. I own Patton. We'll close down all her joints for a week or two and then reopen them as our own. All we'll need to do is change the lease from her name to ours."

"You got it all figured out, eh, Johnny?"

"Right down to the last T. You just do your job right."

Al smiled. "I never miss."

Some time before noon on Tuesday, May 11, 1920, Jim and Dale awoke in their apartment at 3156 Vernon Avenue. After breakfast, Jim told Dale he had to see a man in the cafe at four o'clock. He didn't mention the name of the man to her and she didn't ask him.

She did ask him to send the car back for her because she and her mother were going shopping. He kissed her good-by and left. It was then almost two o'clock.

The chauffeur dropped Colosimo off at the corner of Wabash and 22nd Street about two-thirty and returned for Dale. Colosimo didn't go directly to the cafe. He didn't get there until a little after four. He passed through the square door, which was north of the round door which fronted on the original part of the restaurant. He went straight back to the little office at the rear of the cafe. There he found Frank Camilla, his secretary and bookkeeper.

"What's doing, Frank?"

"Nothing much. I'm going over last night's business."

"How was it?"

"Better than ever. The place is a gold mine."

"Good. Where's Mike?"

"I think he's gone down to Water Street to buy provisions for tonight. That's what he said, anyway. Jim, you said you wanted to call Mr. de Stefano today about those government agents who were here yesterday. I'm reminding you."

"Sure; sure. Glad you did. I'll call Rocco right away. I think those government men were snoopers for the Treasury Department."

Colosimo called Rocco de Stefano and was told by the lawyer's secretary that Mr. de Stefano was out but that he was expected any minute. "Shall I have him call you back?"

"Yes. As soon as he gets in." He hung up and went into the kitchen then to talk with Antonio Caesarino, his chef. He talked with him for about five minutes and then went through the semi-darkness of the restaurant toward the front door:

The front entrance of the north door opened on a small lobby, and as you came in there was a little cloak room on the left. Across the cloak room was an alcove where a cashier sat, and a few feet west of the cashier's alcove, toward the restaurant, was



AL CAPONE

a small inclined stand which held telephone books. About five minutes after Colosimo left Antonio Caesarino there were several shots, or what sounded like shots.

Caesarino and Frank Camilla said later they heard only two shots but they weren't sure they were gunshots because the sounds were muffled. At any rate, Frank Camilla decided to take a look. He walked from his office into the south room of the cafe but saw nothing, and then walked out through the round door to Wabash Avenue. The door locked behind him and he had to walk to the north door in order to reenter

the restaurant. When he did so he saw Big Jim Colosimo on the floor.

He felt Colosimo's body. There was no life there. He looked around the room.

On the telephone stand he found a note in his boss' handwriting. It read:

Swan, I made out the regular statement. You fill in the rest as you see fit. Tell the day men to look after the drugstore and see that they find out where to get the stuff and refill. Don't keep over a dozen men. If you've got more, ask someone to lay off.

The note was signed "Bank." There was a postscript. *Anything you make over fifty dollars belongs to me.* (Mickey is off.)

The signature "Bank" was one given to Colosimo by certain bookies and gamblers who borrowed money from him and so referred to him as their bank.

But what did the note refer to and to whom? Was "Mickey" his partner—Mike The Greek Petzin? And who was Swan? These questions never were answered.

Frank Camilla ran back into the kitchen, where he found Abe Arends, one of Colosimo's managers. "Get the police. Quick. Jim's been shot!"

Arends called a doctor first and then the police. The doctor declared that Colosimo had died almost instantly. "Whoever shot him knew how to handle a gun. This

was a thoroughly professional job."

Chief of Police John J. Garrity and Chief of Detectives Mooney came in several minutes after the doctor arrived on the scene. A squad of detectives also came from the office State's Attorney Maclay Hoyne.

All the employees were rounded up and isolated. They were then grilled individually. No one knew a thing. Joe Gavilla, a waiter, led the detectives to a table in the north room where they found four empty beer bottles and four glasses.

"There were two men and two women here," Gavilla said. "I served them. They came in about an hour before Mr. Colosimo arrived. They drank only this one beer and left. I never saw them before."

On the table, among the bottles and glasses, detectives found a slip of paper. It bore a telephone number. "Calumet 4029." It was the number of the National Rubber Products Company. No one at the place knew anything.

On the same slip of paper was a name and address. "Samuel Levine. Vernon Avenue. It was the same street on which Big Jim and Dale lived. Other words scrawled on the slip of paper were "Saturday evening"—"Buffalo"—"So long vampire"—"So long Letty." The last was the title of one of Dale's favorite numbers.

Rocco de Stefano called up while the police were still on the premises. When told of Colosimo's murder he hurried over immediately. He could offer no information.

Woolfson, Colosimo's chauffeur, was questioned. He said he had left Jim off on the corner of the cafe and then had returned for Dale. And then Dale called the cafe and was told what had happened. She fainted.

She came down to the cafe a short time later, was questioned briefly, and at length in the days that followed on the chance that she might be able to give some clue as to the identity of her husband's slayer. She knew nothing. She was so overwrought and shocked that even if she had known anything at all it is doubtful if she could have recalled it.

Jose Moresco, Victoria's brother, was picked up and questioned. He lived at 2006 Indiana Avenue, just a few blocks from the cafe. He told police he had slept late, that he worked as a clerk in a cigar store on Dearborn Avenue, and was in a restaurant having coffee when he heard Colosimo was dead.

He insisted that he and Jim had remained friends despite his sister's trouble.

Mrs. Nicholas Nardi, a sister of Victoria, also was questioned. She told police Victoria and Jim had quarreled often in the past

three years and that in January 1920, Victoria had taken her jewelry, about \$50,000 worth, and about \$5,000 in cash and left.

Dozens of suspects were picked up, questioned, some held and some released. Hoods, gunmen, thieves, gamblers. No one knew a thing and the police had nothing on which to hold anyone for longer than the legal time provided by law.

The coroner's jury used a form in its verdict that it was to use many hundreds of times again in the years which followed:

"Killed by persons unknown to this jury."

JIM COLOSIMO had made many enemies, built traps for himself in his climb up the ladder to the position of power he held for a decade in which he inflicted beatings, mayhem, and death. But he never lost the pseudo suaveness, the oily smile, the undeniable charm that couldn't be washed off by the blood he had spilled.

As he gathered connections and power in the city through the votes he was able to deliver, he broadened his racket activities. Then, in an uncommonly shrewd maneuver, he switched his votes from Democratic to Republican in a tight mayoral election which put William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson into city hall.

Thompson was a lover of the bright lights and ladies of the

evening, had an itchy palm and a long, agile arm. He was made to order for Colosimo, who catered to him by giving him a private table in the cafe and by supplying him with the prettiest young girls he had in his houses. Everything was on the house.

With the mayor behind him, Colosimo usurped the powers of Councilmen Mike Kenna and John Coughlin and became undisputed boss of the First Ward. His only payoffs were to Big Bill Thompson.

What Jim Colosimo didn't know, and what Johnny Torrio did know, and Al Capone was to learn, was that the greater success one achieved in the underworld jungles the closer one moved to his death. There was no insulation against rival mobsters hungry for power and control of the rackets in a big city.

Colosimo finally did know, however, at that moment when death faced him. Then, in that last second before the guns roared against his ears, and the shock of the first slug that ripped through his body, he wished it could have been otherwise. The slugs slammed him against the walls and he fell in a twisted heap.

He died when he most wanted to live, when he had achieved success, as he gauged success—money, power, recognition in the city, a lovely and loving wife who never had sold shoelaces in the

streets, peddled flower, or worked as a madam in his houses. Through the blood that filled his mouth he uttered one phrase—"Dale . . . Cara mia . . ." And died with her name on his lips.

On May 16, Rocco De Stefano received a telegram from Victoria in Lost Angeles. The wire read:

Shock too much for me. See you Friday. Attend to all my affairs. Am giving you power of attorney.

Victoria reached Chicago on May 21, and went immediately to the office of the attorney, who accompanied her to the detective bureau at 11th and State Streets. She was unable to offer any help or to give even the faintest clew to the murder. Some of the reporters pressed her for a statement.

"Well, Jim is dead," she said, "and I'll say nothing that would further blacken his name. He was good to me until he met Dale Winter, and she never understood him. Jim was Italian, and so am I. We understood each other. My money gave him his start, and I intend to be protected in the disposal of his estate."

She was doomed to disappointment. First of all, Dale Winter as Colosimo's legal wife was entitled to everything he left since there was no will.

Johnny Torrio talked her out of the cafe by offering her \$5,000, which she took because all she

wanted to do was to leave the city and the scenes where so much of her life with Big Jim would bring hurt in the memories they would evoke. That took care of the restaurant.

There were the houses in Burnham. Victoria called Torrio for a meeting.

"How much have I got coming from the take in Burnham?"

Torrio stared at his aunt with a bland expression. "Didn't you know," he said at last, "that every house was closed a month ago? There is no money."

"Johnny, you are a stinking, double-crossing liar. You are my sister's son, my own flesh and blood so to speak, but not quite the same. Your blood is black with lies, with everything that is rotten. And one more thing, Johnny. If I know you, and I think I do, I will say that in some way you had something to do with Jim's death. I wish I could prove it because I would like nothing better than to see you hang."

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Victoria. I have told you the truth."

Victoria laughed. "You miserable, low son, you never knew the truth in your whole life. My sister should have drowned you the day you were born. You have broken her heart a dozen times, aged her beyond her years, killed your father, and you killed Jim! I feel it now. I know it. You killed Jim.



DALE WINTER

May you rot in hell! Get out of my sight! Get out! Get out!"

Torrio went out, a mild grin on his face. He had expected a lot more from Victoria, even a physical attack because she was very good with a knife, a skill she had picked up in her native Sicily. His mother had told him, "Victoria has a very bad temper. When she is mad she will use the knife."

He shrugged his shoulders in a mild gesture of contempt for his aunt and walked leisurely south on Michigan Boulevard toward the Lexington Hotel where Al Capone waited.

Colosimo was given the first of gangland's super funerals. It was

attended by judges, police officials, alderman, lawyers, by stars from the show world and opera, by madams, whores, pimps, hoods, and thieves, and by a grieving widow who wept with a passionate hysteria.

Dale Winter left Chicago shortly after, and in 1924 she married an actor named Henry Duffy with whom she appeared in stock in San Francisco. Victoria went back to Los Angeles to join her lover, Tony Villani. Colosimo's empire now belonged to Johnny Torrio.

The prelude was over, and now the full drama of vice, crime, corruption, and murder was to be played. Maestro Torrio was on the dais, baton in hand, prepared to direct his own score the while he looked toward his first violinist, Signor Alphone Capone, for aid by a brilliant rendition.

"Well, Al," Torrio said, leaned back comfortably in the big chair, crossed his legs, "we're on our way. The restaurant is a good thing but small potatoes. The houses in Burnham will bring in a lot of money but it's a big grind."

Capone lit a big cigar and puffed on it. "I'm listening. I know you've got ideas. You bring them up and I'll carry them out."

"Beer and liquor. This prohibition thing is a big joke. No law is going to make people stop drinking, not even the guys who wrote it into the books. Some-

body's gonna supply it. This town's got about three million people. They're used to having a drink on Christmas, New Year's Eve, Thanksgiving, Passover, on birthdays, at weddings, wakes, or just because they want a drink.

"People aren't going to toast a bride and groom with orange pop or ginger ale. The breweries have made millions. When they go out of business all the millions they made will be hanging in front of every hood's eyes in the country. Everybody will try to get into the act."

"How do we get into it?"

"It will take a little time, a little planning. Already, there are guys in it, in a small way, but they'll grow. We'll have to get into it before they grow too big, organize too well. For instance, there's the South Side O'Donnells and the West Side O'Donnells."

"This is the South Side, isn't it?"

"Yes, but they're farther south, around Fifty-third Street. That's the Hyde Park section."

"They pretty strong?"

"Well, they're brothers, and they stick together. They've got some good boys with them. Good but not too good. On the Near North Side, that's north of the Chicago River—you know where that is?"

"Yeah. I walked around there for a couple of days."

"Well, the Near North Side, from the river to Division Street,

is run by Dion O'Bannion. He's pretty slick. Knows a lot of people, is well liked. He and a guy by the name of George Moran run things all the way to Diversey Street or even up to Irving Park Boulevard. That's 4000 North. The 4000 block as it's known here.

"They're Irish. The O'Donnells are Irish. Also Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake, who're partners. They all stick together. It's all harp music and shamrocks with them guys. Moving in won't be easy. We'll need some good boys."

"I've got four brothers—John, Matt, Mimi, and Ralph. I can call them and they'll come. They'll move outta New York if I say the word."

"Okay. Get them. Now, let me show you how I've got this laid out." Torrio rose from the chair and moved toward a table at the end of the room, drew a piece of paper from his pocket and laid it down on the table.

"See here. This is where we are. I want to go into the suburbs, into Berwyn, which is just west of Cicero, south into Stickney and Forest View, and north into Oak Park. Now, this line that I drew, this heavy line here, is Austin Avenue. It separates Cicero from the suburbs on the west and runs from Sixty-third Street on the south to North Avenue on the north.

"We'll move slowly, inch by

inch, in all directions, invade both the far South Side and the North Side. As we get bigger and stronger we'll advance our lines eastward and grab up Cicero, move north as far as Skokie or Evanston, and south as far as Blue Island in a sort of pincer campaign. Understand?"

Capone nodded, impressed. However, he knew also that a plan was only as good as the men behind it. He had learned that from his days with the Five Points Gang. "It will take a little muscle, Johnny."

"Sure, sure, Al. But first I'll buy up some protection from the cops and politicians in every suburb, give them a piece of the pie. They're all on the take. The graft smells so loud in those towns you can hear it. What I want you to do is buy a car and ride around to all these towns. Look them over. Get familiar with them. Get the feel of them, know them by heart."

"Take a couple of weeks and then we'll go from there. Meanwhile, get in touch with your brothers and anybody else you know that will fit into the organization. I already have a few good boys lined up."

He reached into his pocket, took out some bills. "Here's a couple of grand. Buy a car. The rest is for you, expense money. I don't want you ever to be without money in your jeans. I don't

mean eating money. I mean pay-off dough. At least a grand. Okay?"

"Sure, Johnny. I'll remember that." He did. When he got big he carried as much as fifty thousand dollars in his pockets, in hundred, five hundred, and thousand dollar bills.

O'Bannion, Moran, the O'Donnells, Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake, and several independents were sleeping, unaware of Torrio's plans.

They were too busy with beer and alcohol, making it and delivering it, piling up huge profits.

IN THE YEAR that followed, Torrio and Capone built up a strong organization. They recruited Frank Nitti, Louis "Little New York" Campagna, Charles Gioe, Paul "The Waiter" Ricca, Claude Maddox, Charles and Rocco Fischetti, Capone's cousins from Brooklyn.

Torrio also made a deal with the Genna brothers, sugar dealers and alcohol cookers on the West Side, to buy up their entire output. The organization was beginning to take shape.

On this day, Torrio called in Capone, Frank Nitti, Campagna, and a recent recruit named Frank McErlaine, one of the most brutal thugs in America.

"We want to take over the bookies in this town. All of them. But first in the Loop. There's a

handbook on Wabash near Seventeenth. We are partners. Go tell them."

The handbook was run by two partners named Jack Anthony, an Italian, and Harvey "Hard Hat" Cole, an Irishman, whose nickname came from the fact that he always wore a derby. They were strictly gamblers, had always been gamblers. They didn't know anything about "muscle" or violence.

It was a little before noon when Capone rapped on the glass door. The shade was pushed aside and the doorman peeked through the opening.

"We ain't open yet. Twelve-thirty."

"We want to talk to Anthony and Cole," Al Capone said.

"I'll go tell them." He left and came back a minute later. "Jack said you should come back at twelve-thirty."

"Go back and tell him I said to come to the door," Capone ordered.

The doorman looked Al Capone up and down through the glass door, and then he shifted his gaze to McErlaine, of whom Torrio said, "There's no more murderous man in the world, drunk or sober."

The doorman obviously didn't like what he saw. He left and returned a minute later with Jack Anthony.

"Open up, Jack," Capone said. "We want to talk to you."

Anthony's dark, narrow face looked troubled. He hesitated, saw the impatient frown on Capone's face, then turned the key in the door, and the four men pushed past him and walked into the building.

The layout of the handbook was more or less like most of the books in the city. It was a converted store. A short corridor had been built from about six feet from the door, ran for ten feet, turned left into a sort of foyer constructed from Beaver-board and plaster and enclosed an area six feet wide which led to a solid oak door with a peep hole.

Behind the door was the horse room. There was the usual equipment and paraphernalia, a long wooden counter behind which sat six writers, and opposite the counter was a wide blackboard which carried the entries from the various tracks and the prevailing odds.

Two writers were at the board making changes in the odds and noting the scratches as the information came through.

To the right of the room was a cage from which the winning tickets were paid. The cage, about fifteen feet long and seven feet wide also served as an office. Jack Anthony led the four men to the cage.

"Hard Hat" Cole was sitting at a desk writing figures on a sheet. He was a short, stocky man in his



BIG JIM COLOSIMO

late thirties, pleasant-faced, blue-eyed, black-haired, a lighted cigar stuck in a corner of his mouth and the proverbial derby hat set at a rakish angle on his head. He looked up as Anthony and the four men walked in, glanced at his partner with a curious expression on his ruddy face.

Anthony and Cole, like all the other bookies in Chicago, believed they had nothing to worry about from anyone so long as they paid for their wire service and their weekly protection money. On the South Side it was to Big Jim O'Leary.

Things changed suddenly and violently. Al Capone got right down to business.

"We're your partners," he said to the two men. "Fifty-fifty."

Anthony's face grew suddenly tight and his eyes narrowed. "Who says so?" There was a grimness around his mouth.

"I say so," Capone said, and his voice was even, soft, but there was something as hard as a frozen diamond back of the softness.

"*You* say so?" Anthony retorted. "You! Who the hell are you? You come in here with your tough guys and say you're taking over, as partners. We work for ten years, sweating and boiling, and you come in off the street and want to take half the place!" His voice rose with emotion and anger.

Two of the writers behind the counter moved restlessly and looked toward the cage. Al Capone nodded to Nitti and Louis Campagna and they stepped out of the cage and into the big room.

Nitti said, "Don't none of you guys do anything but sit right where you are. You got nothing to do with this. You don't wanna get hurt, so don't ask for it." He looked from one to the other of the men, then to the two board writers. Everyone got the idea. Nitti and Campagna then went back into the cage.

Anthony turned his head and spat at Capone's feet. Capone slammed his fist into Anthony's face. The punch threw the slight Italian against the wall. Al Ca-

pone reached out his two hands and yanked Anthony toward him, slammed his fist into his face again and again. The blood poured out of Anthony's nose and mouth.

"Turn him loose!" Cole yelled, and leaped to his feet.

McErlaine reached over and pulled Cole to him, but the stocky Mick was full of fight. He hit McErlaine with a right to the jaw which didn't even faze the harsh-faced thug.

McErlaine reached inside his coat, yanked out a heavy automatic pistol and slugged Cole over the head, and then again, opening up his skull. Cole collapsed.

Two of the writers came out from behind the counter and started for the cage. Nitti and Campagna met them, guns in hand.

"Get back, you bastards, or I'll blow your heads off!" Nitti ordered. The two men stopped dead in their tracks and backed away from Nitti and Campagna.

Nitti called to the taller of the two men, a tall, slim, dapper man in his early thirties, a professional gambler, the type that carries a switchblade. "You. Come here!" He pointed a finger at the man. "You, I said. Come here!"

The man hesitated.

"Come here!" Nitti yelled. The man advanced, slowly. When he got about three feet from Nitti he stopped. "I told you to stay out

of this, didn't I?" Nitti yelled at him. "I told you that you got nothing to do with this, didn't I? When I say something I mean it, you dumb bastard!"

Nitti swung the gun across the guy's face. Blood spurted from the gash and the man dropped to the floor, out cold. Nitti stared at the unconscious form, spat at him, then looked up at the other men in the room.

"You guys just leave him like he is, right there, see. I want him to bleed a little."

Inside the cage Al Capone was talking to Anthony and Cole, who had been revived. "Get this straight, once and for all. We're in. Either we're in for half the joint or for all of it, and if we have to take it all you won't be around to argue about it. Don't go to any cops about this because that won't do you any good either. Understand?"

Anthony said something in Italian to Capone.

"That's just too damned bad. Things are changing. This is the way it's going to be from now on. All over town. We'll send our man around every Monday noon to pick up our end. It had better be right too. If you hold out it will be the last time."

This was Al Capone. He was barely twenty-three years old at the time, a man with no more than a third grade education, a foreigner, born in Naples, an invader, a

man who had set out to conquer the second largest city in the United States.

His assets were no more than his cunning, ruthlessness, a native intelligence, nerves of steel, cold logic, and behind him a man with the diplomatic shrewdness of a Disraeli or a Winston Churchill.

What intellectual infirmities Capone did possess came entirely from the fact of his twisted sense of morality, of the accepted standards of right and wrong. But he had an answer for that too.

"The people want what we have to offer—vice, beer, liquor, gambling, the dodges and deadfalls."

He was right. The city that was struck by this ghastly plague contained in the gangster-ridden rule pandered its own morality to the lawlessness it was to decry, bribed the scum to the surface by buying what was offered them.

The taking over of the bookie joints was accomplished after a short time. At first it was half the business; then it was all of it. There were those who fought it, who were stubborn, who believed they could resist and win. They wound up with broken heads, arms, and legs, and some of them with their lifeless bodies in a rain-soaked ditch.

It was the same with all the brothels in the city and in the suburbs. Torrio recognized the fact that he had in Capone a man

with undue ability for the things he didn't want to do now—brutal beatings, the depraved disregard for the rights of others, the maniacal lust for murder, and that Al Capone also had an ability with men, how to place them, use them, control them.

He suggested to Torrio that Harry Cusick and his wife Alma take over the management of the brothels. Harry and Alma had worked for Colosimo for a time and Torrio recalled them. Harry had a brother, Jake, who had worked for him as a waiter in his saloon and restaurant. Al Capone suggested that the little roly poly ex-waiter might be just the guy to handle the accounts for the many brothels they now controlled.

"You mean two brothers and the wife of one?" Torrio said, a note of surprise in his tone. "Hell, Al, they'll cheat us silly."

"No, they won't. I talked to all three. Jake is okay. So's Harry and Alma. We need them."

Torrio shrugged. "Okay. It'll be your problem, just in case."

"I can handle it," Capone replied shortly.

Torrio ignored the mild sarcasm and said, "We're ready to move in on the beer and liquor business. I made a deal for a brewery. A guy named Joseph Stenson owns it. He's a millionaire and got most of it since prohibition. That's two years ago.

The place he owns is called the Sieben Brewery. It's on the North Side."

"What about those Micks, O'Bannon and Moran?"

"We don't have to start any wars."

Capone laughed a short hollow laugh, jerked a cigar from an inside coat pocket and lit it. He walked away from Torrio and stood at the window of the large room which overlooked Michigan Boulevard. He turned suddenly.

"Listen, Johnny," he said tightly, "we're moving in. That means we're going to have to move them out. You think those guys will stand still when we try to take over?" He waved a hand. "Hell, we'll have to kill a few of them, or all of them." His words were prophetic but he didn't know it then.

Torrio said, "We have to move fast; get things rolling. I talked to Mike, Pete, and Angelo Genna today. They've got a whole warehouse of alcohol over on Taylor Street and they want to move it. I fixed up a cutting plant in a place in Burnham. Used to be a big garage. Also another one on Roosevelt Road. Everything is ready in both places, bottles, labels, filling machines, the whole works."

"I'll take you over to see the places and explain things to you so you'll understand the whole operation. We'll need men. You

take care of that. Drivers, helpers, workers in the plants. I've taken care of the trucks. There are three trucks in each place. It will do for a starter. We need a man to handle the girlie joints. You got any ideas?"

"Yeah. Let Jake handle them."

"Jake?"

"Sure. Jake can handle it real good."

"Okay. Let Jake handle it."

THAT PHRASE WAS to become a familiar one in the years that followed. It was modified somewhat to "See Jake" or "Jake will handle it" or "Let Jake straighten it out." He became the payoff man for the Syndicate, the bagman, and it made him one of the most powerful figures in the city and rich beyond his dreams.

In the Sieben Brewery, Torrio explained the making of beer to Capone. He first introduced him to the government inspector who checked on the beer production. The inspector explained his role.

"Prohibition has made high alcoholic content beer illegal. What is made here—" he paused to wink at Capone—"is called 'near-beer' and it's made by simply removing the alcohol, or by reducing it."

"I see," Capone said. "Very interesting."

Torrio touched Al Capone's arm and the two moved away. Torrio said, "He's on the payroll.

These guys get a lot of zeros in money from the government for their work. They listen easy to an extra C-note a week. I've got four of them on our payroll. Come on over here. I want to explain how the beer is made. You should know it."

"Sure. I want to."

"Okay. Now, the common method in making beer is to grind up the malt, allow it to germinate, mix it with water which then produces a starch out of the mash. This in turn converts into maltose and leaves a sweet liquid which is called wort. The wort is then boiled and filtered to remove the solids, and then yeast is added and fermentation takes place.

"Each brewer, of course, has his own method and his own technique of utilizing this process and he guards it closely. That's why the various beers are different from each other in taste, texture and color. Understand?"

Capone nodded. "Yeah. I think I'll come by here and stick around for a couple of days so I'll learn it thoroughly."

"Good idea. We have some of the best brewers in the business. Sieben is noted for that. Stenson imported several of these guys from Bavaria. That's two of them over there. Now, we have the best product in the city. I know because I tasted some of the beer Moran and O'Bannion turn out. It's brewed in dirty kettles and

put up in dirtier kegs. It's alley beer.

"Any bartender or owner will know the difference immediately. Your job? Put our beer in every saloon on the South Side. We'll start there first."

Al Capone nodded. "Tomorrow. I'll start tomorrow. I'll make up three teams. Nitti will handle one, McErlaine another, and McGurn the third."

Torrio frowned. "This kid Jack McGurn. What about him?"

Capone smile. "Top-notch. All guts. He killed four men, guys who murdered his stepfather. Did it alone too. He's going to be the best man we've got. When trouble comes he'll be my choice to handle it."

The takeover was slow, brutal, bloody, and murderous. O'Banion objected long and loud. "That heathen pimp Capone shows his face around here and I'll push him into the Chicago River. And that goes for that runt Torrio too!"

Moran objected. So did Frankie Lake and Terry Drugan, and the O'Donnells, the West Side and South Side O'Donnells, especially the brothers O'Donnell —there were five of them. Tommy, Walter, and Spike shot and killed a minor hireling of the gang.

That was all Capone wanted. He sent McErlaine, McGurn, and Frank Nitti to the South Side, to

a saloon on Lincoln Street, operated by Joe Platka.

"That's where the O'Donnells hang out," Al said. "Take 'em!"

When the three killers strode into the saloon Tommy and Walter O'Donnell dashed into a back room and dove headlong through a glass window. George Meeghan and George Butcher, two other members of the gang, raced out a side door. Only Jerry O'Connor didn't make it.

McGurn grabbed O'Connor, slugged him across the face with the barrel of the sawed-off shotgun then pushed him through the front door and into the street, and there he slammed him up against the wall of the building.

McErlaine said, "Back away, Jack."

McGurn stepped to one side and McErlaine leveled his shotgun at the hapless hood and blew his head off. That was Capone's reply to the O'Donnells' cracks of "dago punks" and "stinking grease-balls."

It was his blood-soaked notice to the underworld that he would back up everything he said; and not to believe it was to die, not quietly, cleanly, peacefully, among friends, but surrounded by pain-giving relentless enemies. He wanted that emphasized. When he was finished not a single one of the O'Donnells remained.

The Torrio-Capone Syndicate grew through mayhem and mur-

der, through payoffs to every top official in the city, to the cops on the beats, detectives, councilmen, representatives and senators.

Men of inordinate shrewdness, cunning, and viciousness were added. Murray "The Camel" Humphries, Charlie "Cherry-Nose" Gioe, Charlie Carr, Phil D'Andrea, Albert Anselmi and John Scalisi, the last two cruel and inhuman killers imported from New York.

Together with Jack McGurn they murdered Dion O'Bannion in a killing which shook the underworld to its heels.

Reprisals by the remaining members of O'Bannion's mob, headed by Hymie Weiss, as dangerous and violent as Capone himself, and Bugs Moran and his gang, and Joe Aiello and his gang were swift.

More than a hundred men died in the next several months on all sides. Guns roared a racketing blast as slugs whined off stone, glass, and concrete. The machine-gun was introduced and its horrifying sound became familiar to the man in the street as rival mobsters cut each other in half with fiery bursts. Pandemonium was a daily occurrence in one part of the city or another as black sedans filled with killers cruised about seeking victims.

Hymie Weiss, Bugs Moran, the Aiello's, and Jack Zuta moved in two cars through the South Side

looking for McGurn, Capone, and Torrio. On January 24, 1935, Torrio and his wife drove up in front of their apartment building at 7011 Clyde Avenue and stopped. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of this winter day. Mrs. Torrio got out of the car first and walked up the steps of the building while Johnny lingered to pick up some parcels in the back seat of the car.

Torrio gathered up the packages and started for the entrance. As he did so, two men raced toward him from across the street, guns in hand. The volley of gunfire splattered against the building. Torrio dropped the bundles he was carrying and ran. He wasn't fast enough. Five shots found their mark.

Torrio was rushed to the Jackson Park Hospital. His jaw had been shattered. He had two wounds in the chest, one in the abdomen, and one in the right arm. The bullets, it was found, had been rubbed with garlic, which brought on a deadly toxic condition.

Torrio's life hung on by the slimmest of threads for ten days, and then he rallied, much to the amazement of the doctors and the rage and disappointment of Weiss, Moran, Aiello and Zuta.

The attempt on his life brought out Torrio's true color and showed it to be a bright yellow. All during the time he was in the hospital

there was a squad of police detailed to guard him. Al Capone also posted a dozen of his toughest hoods outside the hospital.

Torrio carried on like a panic-stricken spinster on a date with a known wolf. He refused to eat his food until it was first tasted by a nurse. He insisted that each cop be screened before being placed on guard duty in his room or in the corridor. He was so frightened at times that he actually shook.

There was a case of violation of the prohibition law pending against him, and when he recovered he was taken to court under heavy guard, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to ninety days, the term to be served in the jail at Waukegan. Here, too, he was guarded day and night.

While he was in jail, Torrio called in his lawyers, business advisers, and Capone. There were daily meetings and conferences which lasted for long hours. When they were finally over, Torrio didn't own a piece of property or a dollar's worth of business in Chicago. He relinquished every interest in the Syndicate to Capone. Al accepted the reins with a big smile on his face.

Before he was released from jail, Torrio arranged with Capone to have an escort of a dozen hoods, riding in four cars, take him out of the city. He was released a little after midnight, has-

tened out a rear door, driven to Indiana, where he boarded a train for New York. He went to Italy shortly after and stayed there for three years. He never returned to Chicago.

What followed when Capone took over completely is something which has never been equaled in criminal history. But that's quite another story.

In April 1957, Johnny Torrio suffered a heart attack and died. He was seventy-five years old, one of the few gangsters to reach that ripe old age or to expire a natural death in his own bed. For sixty of those seventy-five years he had lived outside the law, committed every crime in the books, cheated, double-crossed, violated every commandment. Yet, two things were in his favor.

The underworld respected him even while they feared and hated him. He was a faithful husband and his wife was once prompted to say, "I have had the most glorious life any woman can know. My husband has been loyal, devoted, loving. He had never known any other woman but me from the day we first met. That is all I can say of him."

The underworld respected Torrio because he was solid. He wouldn't squeal.

When he was shot and in the hospital, police brought suspects to his bedside, among them Bugs Moran and Hymie Weiss, the two

men who had tried to kill him, for identification.

Torrio said, "No use bringing anyone else in here. I won't rap any of them. I wouldn't lay the finger on a mongrel dog."

For years after he returned from Italy he was considered the official statesman of the underworld, with headquarters in New York. He was the man who formulated the national criminal combine which operates so efficiently today. His plan for organization of the gangs of the country into a solidarity was so thorough and is today so well constituted that no one may cross a boundary line and no one may

be assassinated without full approval of the board of directors.

This was Johnny Torrio, surely the most brilliant criminal mind the nation ever suffered.

If he is to be remembered for anything at all, however, it is that he invented Al Capone, taught him, trained him, made of him a figure that impinged itself on the mind of America in a way no other law-breaker has ever equaled—not Dillinger, Legs Diamond, Lucky Luciano, Jack McGurn, Ma Barker, the petty thieves Bonnie and Clyde, or any other miscreant whose deeds have darkened the pages of criminal history.

Let it so be known.



NEXT MONTH'S HEADLINERS

KILL IN THE DARK by BRETT HALLIDAY

The New Mike Shayne Short Novel

THE HIPPIE MURDERS by MAX VAN DERVEER

A New Kevin Kar Spy Novelet

MACE MURDER by ROBERT EDMOND ALTER

DON'T MAKE IT A FEDERAL CASE by ED LACY

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BLIND LADY JUSTICE

A Shocking Novelet

by EDWARD Y. BREESE

Good . . . Evil . . . he'd known them both, intimately and too well. Now, for the first time, he was facing a devil stronger than he could ever be. There was only one thing left to do . . .

WE WEREN'T brothers or partners, or even particularly good friends, but our lives were tied together like the four legs of a table. No matter how separate our ways seemed to be, no matter how separate we willed them to be, we were tied by a fate that no one of us could break.

In the end we had each to learn the same lesson, whether we liked or no. It's a simple lesson. It's been told to you, as it was to us. Like us, you'll have to learn it for yourself.

"There's a price on everything," it says. "You get nothing for nothing, friend."

They say that only man wants something for nothing—and that every man wants it. I've heard that

this is the one trait that we share with no other thing that walks or flies or crawls.

We all four had the craving—the dream, if you like. We wanted the moon just for the wishing, not for climbing step by step. Perhaps I'm less of an addict than the rest. That may be why I'm called "The Honest Cop."

We all started even. We were born and raised within a few blocks of each other out back of the yards in what's still called the Ironbound District. Not much of a boyhood in one way, all rough and tumble and fists flying. Hand-me-down clothes and sometimes not enough to eat.

The Ironbound paralyzes most of its people long before they're



grown. They never get away, because it's taken from them whatever is needed to make the break. Most of them never really want to get away.

A few do. They want passion-

ately to climb up and up. For them the District is a challenge and a stimulus. In time they go free of it. They always try to go a long, long way. In the end they find they've taken some of their youth along.

That's one of the points of my story.

Gerry Martin was the eldest of the four of us. The Honorable Gerald Martin, he is now; the rich man's judge and the organization judge. He's an ornament to the bench and a sound man to try a case before, if you're one of the Power Structure. The poor whites and the colored call him a hanging judge.

He has the white hair and the pale blue eyes and the barbered look that goes well with his robes. Giving judgment, he keeps his hands in his lap. His hands are as rough-knuckled and short fingered as mine. They're really his father's hands. The judge has come a long, long way.

I was born on the same block as Judge Martin, but a good ten years later than he. We were never friends as boys for that reason, although I remember him as the cock o' the walk with my oldest brother's crowd. Then he went away to college and law school, and it was years before I saw him again. When I did, I recognized him but he looked right past me. He made the graduation talk to my class at the police academy. I got a nice word with my diploma handshake though. In our town judges are elected.

Curiously enough I loved the law. Perhaps I loved it more than Judge Martin or anyone else on the local bench. I'd seen too much anarchy as a boy. Order, to me,

meant freedom from fear for the small and the weak. Law meant the only chance most people would ever have to draw a breath in peace. That's why I wanted to be a cop in the first place and why I'm the sort of cop I am.

I'm Matthew Burke, and I'm proud that they call me Honest Matt. It's the way I want to be.

Pete Willis loved the Law too, but he loved it in a very different way. For Pete the law was a staircase and a key. A stair to climb from Willis' Workingman's Saloon all the way to Oak Hill Road Estates, and a key to unlock the country club and the First National Bank. Pete knew what he wanted, what he called the finer things of life. He used the law to get them, and he used it with immense success.

Pete's way, like mine, was to wear a badge; but unlike me he wore it first, last and always for his own personal benefit. Like the judge he was an organization man, though in a somewhat different way. A cop can be a politician, and a politician who is also a cop can do a lot for himself. Pete did. Nobody called him Honest Pete, but on the other hand they called him Captain Willis when I was still a sergeant.

He looked well in uniform and the citizens loved his easy smile. After he earned a medal shooting it out with a couple of mentally retarded hoods they made him a detective, first class. From there to

head of the Rackets Squad was only a matter of time. He worked hard at his politics and the rest came easy. All sorts of things came easy for Pete.

Pete was ten years younger than me. So was his cousin and sidekick, Red Jack O'Brien. Jack was another lad to mine the law as if it were a new and better Comstock Lode. They put him in the Army, and that gave him college on the G.I. Bill. He went to law school nights after that and let Pete steer him into politics.

When Red Jack passed the bar, he started for the top of his profession. Someday he'll get there. He's not far from it now.

For Jack, as for any other young lawyer with an Ironbound background, the best opportunities lay in criminal law. He lacked the social connections to make it into one of the big estate or business law firms. Just as he lacked the patience for the long apprenticeship that would have involved.

Instead he took a desk at Moore, Murphy, Cohen, Kahn and Zink. Inside of five years his name was on the door—down at the bottom of the line, of course. Judge Martin was shaking his hand in the courthouse lobby and accepting his check at election time. The local representatives of a couple of national syndicates sent their boys to him. Apprentice hoods back in the old Ironbound called him the man with the golden mouth. He drove

an imported sports car and wore sixty dollar shoes and three hundred dollar suits.

In the course of a day's work we all saw plenty of each other. We were in and around the courts and station house and passed each other on the streets. Judge Martin tried the hoods I pinched and attorney O'Brien got them off, that sort of thing. We were all a long way from back-of-the-yards, but in a way it was like being alumni of the same school. Besides all that, the law was a profession for all four of us. It was something that kept us in touch, even when we didn't plan it that way.

That's the way it stood the day the grand jury called me in to testify. A particularly messy killing, brought on by squabbles over a rich numbers territory had hit the papers just before this particular jury was impaneled. On top of that the foreman was a college professor named Murdock, a dour intellectual with a real case of crusading fever. Between one thing and another the word had gotten out that this jury would go for broke before its term was up.

While I didn't know which way they'd jump, I was all for action. Nobody's in a better position to know how dirty a town's gotten than a cop. I knew that ours was long overdue for a thorough cleaning out. I rather hoped they'd ask my opinion. That was silly, of course. Nobody asks a sergeant for

opinions. He's lucky if they listen when they ask for facts.

It was a raw March day and slush stood in the gutters outside the courthouse. I didn't really expect any fireworks, just some talk and drum-beating and then a quiet whitewashing when the real political pros took over.

Murdock surprised me. I could see as soon as I was sworn in that this jury had something up its sleeve. I didn't know what, of course. The grapevine had failed completely on this one. Not that it made much difference. I am an honest cop, whatever that is. Even if I'd known what was coming, I'd still have had to answer as I did.

They swore me in and let me sit at a table facing the jury. Murdock asked a few questions to establish my experience and competence. Then the bomb went off.

The bailiff showed me a blue velvet jewel case.

"Open it, Sergeant," Murdock said.

When I did, the thing inside blazed in the hard electric lights. It was a gold brooch modeled in the shape of a peacock with the tail full-spread. The tail was jewelled, crusted over with small stones. There were chip diamonds, rubies, emeralds and semi-precious stones. None of them were very big, of course. This was no Hope Diamond in value. Chiefly it was flashy and spectacular, the sort of piece you don't forget seeing.

"Have you ever seen this piece of jewelry before, Sergeant?"

Not knowing what was coming next, I looked the brooch over carefully. "I have, sir."

"Can you be absolutely sure?"

"It isn't the sort of thing a man forgets easily, sir," I said. "Besides, if you look on the back, you'll find the word PAON engraved, and a date. Nineteen-twenty-something I think."

I was right. It was 1927.

"Then tell us, Sergeant, just where and under what circumstances you saw this jewelry before. Every time."

"I only saw it once," I said. "This was with a whole lot of other items of jewelry that the robbers didn't get when Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Ramsay were torture-robbed in their own home. As you may remember, the Ramsays were awakened about two in the morning, bound and burned with a hot electric iron and cigarette stubs until Mr. Ramsay revealed the combination of his wall safe."

The safe was emptied of twenty-five thousand dollars in cash and bonds, a diamond necklace and a collection of foreign gold coins. Most of Mrs. Ramsay's jewelry wasn't taken because it wasn't in the safe. In fear of robbery she put the best pieces, of which this peacock brooch was one, in an old shoe box on the floor of the guest-room closet. They missed it completely."

"How did you happen to see this jewelry?"

"I was with the police who answered the alarm. As a matter of routine we checked everything against the insurance company list Mr. Ramsay gave us. That way we made sure exactly what had and hadn't been taken. It's S.O.P. with us, sir."

Murdock smiled. "I take it that means standard operating procedure."

"It does. Yes."

"Tell me, then, was either Mr. or Mrs. Ramsay present when you inventoried the jewelry which the robbers had missed?"

"No," I said. "Mrs. Ramsay was suffering from burns and shock. The family doctor was present and had given her a strong sedative. Mr. Ramsay was naturally worried. He's an old man himself and was pretty well under shock. He was with his wife."

"Who was present, then?"

"I was, sir, and Patrolman Brown. Also Captain Willis of the racket squad was in the room with one of his men. I think it was Detective Robert M. Smith. The four of us were all there. Captain Willis, as senior officer present, made the actual inventory."

"You're absolutely sure you saw this peacock brooch? I want you to think carefully."

I was positive. "I'm absolutely sure, Mr. Murdock. It's such a distinctive piece that I know I couldn't



be mistaken. An ordinary ring or something I might get mixed up about. Not that one. It stands out like a lighthouse at night."

The line of questioning was beginning to bother me. I already sensed the reason for his interest in the brooch. There was nothing I could do about it though.

It didn't surprise me when Murdock produced a blue folder holding several sheets of legal sized typewriter paper and asked me to

examine it carefully, and identify it for the Grand Jury.

"This is an official police robbery report," I told them. "I note that it is the one filed regarding the Ramsay robbery."

"Who is it signed by, Sergeant?"

I knew of course, but I made a show of looking for the signature. "By Captain Peter Willis, sir."

"Now examine the inventory of valuables stolen and remaining in the house. It is a part of the report."

I did so.

"Do you find the peacock brooch mentioned, Sergeant?"

My heart went down into my shoes—not so much for Pete Willis as for all of us on the Force. "Yes, sir. I do."

"How is it listed, Sergeant?"

I tried. "There's apparently been a mistake made, sir. That piece is listed here as having been stolen. I guess—"

"Don't guess, Sergeant Burke." Murdock's voice was stern. "Please confine yourself to the facts, and the facts alone."

He turned to the other jury members. "A mistake was made all right, gentlemen. But I'm afraid it wasn't the innocent typing error Sergeant Burke would like to believe. I think we can prove that no less than four valuable pieces of jewelry which the armed robbers never SAW are here listed as stolen. The question, then, is who stole them?"

The question carried its own an-

swer. There was only one possible picture they could make. Police venality. Robbery by the strong arm of the law. It's been done before.

It's actually the easiest way in the world to steal. There's already been a breaking and entering or an armed robbery. All that has to be done is to pick up what the thieves have overlooked and credit them with not overlooking. Sometimes small sums of money vanish this way. Sometimes, as in this case, valuable jewelry or even negotiable securities.

It's so easy that the wonder isn't that it happens, but that it happens as seldom as it does. Most cops are honest like me. At least ninety-nine out of every hundred. The one wormy apple spoils the picture where the public is concerned.

I wasn't even too surprised that it was Pete Willis who was involved. Like I said Pete, saw the law as a way to make his fortune first and last. He didn't serve it; he made the law work for him. A captain makes good money, but not new-Cadillac-every-year money. His pay doesn't cover genuine diamond cuff links or vacations in Las Vegas. Pete had all these things, and the money had to come from somewhere.

To be perfectly honest I'd never inquired too closely into how he got these things. I'd never really wanted to inquire. Oh, not for Pete's own sake. We'd never been close friends what with his being so

much younger and all. And being Ironbound alumni doesn't stretch all that far.

It was mostly that I'd hoped there might never have to be a Grand Jury hearing. For the sake of the force and all the honest men behind a badge I hadn't wanted to be the one to blow the lid off. Funny, isn't it? Here it was my testimony they'd asked for first of all when the time finally came. No matter how hard a man tries, he can't evade or avoid a thing.

They didn't hold me any longer. They sent me away before going on with the hearing. I saw a couple of the panel men give me curious looks as I got up to go. I knew what they were thinking. Had I been in on the theft?

You can't beat the grapevine when something like this breaks. By the time I got back to the station house the word had gone on ahead. Sergeant Dunning stopped me on the sidewalk before I went in.

"Pete wants to see you around the corner," he said. I went with him. What else was there to do?

Around-the-corner meant the back room at the Dutchman's Bar where a lot of the brass hung out. Pete Willis was at his regular corner table with Smith and Lieutenant Minko.

"We hear they're on to something," Pete said.

"They are," I gave it to him straight. "They're onto you, Cap-

tain. And to tell the truth I think they've got you." I told him exactly what had happened in the jury room.

He thought it over. "I gave that brooch to a girl," Pete said. "Maybe she hocked it or maybe just wore it where she'd be seen. She hasn't been around lately. Either she told somebody where she got it, or they guessed."

"Yeah," Smith said. "Whatever started it all they had to do was check the robbery report list with old lady Ramsay. She'd remember to the last brass paper clip what she had in that shoe box. Probably the insurance people got onto this first and then took it to old Murdock. He'd be smart enough to know what to do."

"He would," Pete said, "and he's doing it. Burke handled this as well as he could, but there'll be no burying this now."

"No," I said. "No burying. No whitewash. This Murdock is honest and smart. The pity is most cops are honest too."

"You're honest all right," Pete said. "So honest your pants are patched. Don't worry about us, honest cop. We'll know how to handle this."

"What will we do, Pete?" Minko asked.

"I'm not sure," Pete said, "but I don't have to be. My good buddy and mouthpiece Jack O'Brien gets paid to have those answers. Between him and Judge Martin we'll

walk out of court smelling like roses."

"Let's all drink to that," Smith said.

"I've got to go," I said, and got up. Right then I wasn't in the mood to drink with the rackets squad. I wanted to get off some place and have a good three fingers of smooth bourbon all by myself to take the taste of them out of my mouth. They never even noticed it when I left.

Back at the station house Chief Barton called me into his private sanctum sanctorum. He was just as upset about the whole dirty mess as I was, and for the same reasons.

"Jack O'Brien will get them off," he said disgustedly. "Old Martin will give out another one of his violated-rights directed verdicts. They'll walk away. And for the next ten years every honest citizen will spit when he sees a cop."

"You really believe that, don't you?"

"Matt," he said, "I've known you thirty years now, and you me. To you I say what I mean. And you know it too. The judge, the lawyer and the cop; each one crooked in his own way. They stick together. Everything smooth and cooperative like a ball game. Like Tinker to Evers to Chance. As long as they do, it's an unbeatable combination. Isn't it?"

"As long as they stick together," I said. "Yes. But when did we ever know honor or loyalty among

thieves? If it was possible, the police might as well resign and go home. You know better, Chief. Thirty years you and I've fought for the law, and for thirty years we've watched the unbeatable combinations break up and go down in ruin."

"Are you talking like a cop or a philosopher?" he asked.

"Both," I said. "You've got to be both in this business. Besides, I know Pete Willis and the other two. They come from my part of town, my sort of people."

"What's that mean, Burke?"

"It means there's three kinds of people in the Ironbound Districts of this country. The first kind doesn't count. It never gets out. The second kind come up the hard way and the right way. That kind you can't lick. Like you and me. They can kill us, but they can't ever eat us. The third kind are like Pete Willis. They throw away everything but the drive to get up. In the long run they throw away too much. They can't win."

Chief Barton went over and locked his door. Then he poured us each two fingers of bourbon from his private stock.

"Never drink on the job," he said. "This time I will. I hope you're right, Matt, but I doubt if the time is yet. The question is—what do we do about this mess right now?"

His desk phone rang. He picked it up and listened briefly, then

turned to me. "Unlock the door, Matt. I don't understand this, but Judge Martin is coming up to see me. Stay, if he lets you."

Judge Martin was wearing a three hundred dollar, hand stitched overcoat and smoking a two dollar cigar. He took the best chair.

"Good afternoon, Chief," he said. "Hello, Matt. Sit down. You might as well both hear this."

"Yes sir, Judge," I said.

The chief just waited for whatever he had to say.

"I didn't come up here to mince words," the judge said. "We all know each other here and can talk off the record. I know what you've been talking about. I know more than you do in fact. Within twenty-four hours the Grand Jury is going to indict Captain Willis of the racket squad. Maybe a couple of his men with him."

He paused. I waited for Barton. The chief said nothing at all. If Martin had something on his mind, he was going to have to spell it out without help from us.

He did. "When the indictment is in I want Willis arrested and treated like any other crook. I want you to make a case that can't be broken. Do you understand, completely and without reservations?"

For myself I wasn't sure that I did. This was the exact opposite of what I'd expected to hear. I could see by the chief's expression that he felt the same way. We both



kept silent. Judge Martin chose to ignore the obvious.

"You heard right," he said. "I meant exactly that. Let's say, I hate a crooked cop like you do. I mean to make a real example of this case. I felt that if I told you in person, you'd set the record straight all the way down the line. I want all possible evidence found and produced in court. I want no mistakes with this one."

"We understand," Chief Barton said.

It was a flat lie, but what else could he say?

When the judge was gone I automatically locked the door while the chief broke out the bottle again. This time we got four fingers apiece.

"Matt," he said, "I'll be damned! We both heard it, but I don't believe it."

"Judge Martin hates a crooked cop," I said.

"Come off it, Matt. Judge Martin made this particular crooked cop. They've been buddy-buddy for ten years. Now, all of a sudden, he's crying for his blood."

"Try Mother Murphy," I suggested.

The Chief picked up his phone again. Old Mrs. Murphy, widow of a cop killed in line of duty years ago, was official and unofficial queen of the departmental grapevine. She'd been given a job in Records to eke out a totally inadequate pension, and over the years had come to know more about the men on the force than we knew about ourselves. She was just about 98.6% accurate and reliable.

"What's Judge Martin got against Pete Willis?" the Chief asked.

Two minutes later Barton put the phone back in its cradle.

"We're in luck, Matt," he said. "Pete's been seen around town dating the Judge's daughter Ruthie. Apparently poppa doesn't approve."

I finished the last drop of my bourbon. "I got it. It's one thing to bring up a crooked cop and another to raise a daughter. If he thought his baby was really in love with Pete that would answer a lot of questions. Might even explain how old Murdock came to look into that brooch business in the first place."

The chief agreed. "Pete should

have had better sense. Still, who are we to complain? It's only something like this will ever give us a chance to clean house around here."

"I only hope it's that easy," I said. "It may get a lot more complicated before it's over. Martin and Willis are both hard as nails and smart as foxes. Pete won't just lie down to take a rap, and the judge won't hand over his daughter to a man he knows is a bum. This is likely to really explode."

I was right.

The first shocker came that same day. When the grand jury went into special evening session, presumably to draw up an indictment, Captain Pete Willis was waiting in the hallway with his attorney, O'Brien. They asked officially for a chance to testify before the Jury "to clear Captain Willis' name".

The foreman granted permission, and the two were in front of the Jury for almost four hours. When they came out O'Brien was seen to be very well pleased with himself.

The grapevine, in this case the bailiff and court reporter, couldn't tell us why he should be.

"Pete Willis spilled his guts," the bailiff told Chief Barton. "He gave names and dates and details like a reporter doing a news story. He involved a couple of his squad boys too. You never heard anything like it."

"He must have made a deal," the chief ventured.

"No deal. At least not while he was in there. I know it sounds crazy, but it's so. Red Jack even handed over a signed statement that his client was willing to testify and why. I didn't get to read it, but Murdock and the rest sure did."

We couldn't figure it at all. It wasn't like Pete or O'Brien either to give up without a fight. Yet apparently that was exactly what they'd done.

"It's crazy," one of my squad said. "It's just plain nuts. A smart cookie like Pete Willis doesn't just spill his guts when his own neck's at stake."

"You think maybe his own conscience might of caught up with him?" somebody else asked.

The consensus was that if Pete had ever had a conscience, it had atrophied sometime before he got to fifth grade in school. "He couldn't get religion, no more than a rattlesnake could!"

"But why?" This was young Will Shedbolt. "Why throw in the towel and talk all over the place? He had a good defence."

"What defence?"

"Simply that he never saw the missing stones. They weren't in the shoebox or anywhere else in the house. When he saw them on the insurance inventory he naturally checked them off as stolen. Maybe the thieves got them. May-

be a servant pilfered them. Maybe the old woman lost them or gave them away and forgot. How would he know?"

"There's one flaw in that," I told him. "When the grand jury got that peacock brooch they must have gotten the woman he gave it to at the same time. If she hasn't talked yet, she will. When Judge Martin gets at her she will."

"The judge means to crucify Pete, doesn't he?" The news about Pete and Ruthie and the way the judge felt was out by now.

"He ain't planning to give the bride away," somebody said, and the rest of them laughed.

I didn't see anything to laugh about. I knew Gerry Martin and I knew Pete Willis. These were fierce and violent men, without scruples and without mercy. The judge was old enough to set his mind rock hard. He'd never give his baby to a crooked cop, particularly not a cop from Ironbound. He knew the breed too well for that. He knew what sort of man Pete Willis was, and what he'd do to a nice girl before he broke her heart.

Pete was just as stubborn and just as hard. The fact that Ruthie was denied him would make him red hot to have her. He was young and arrogant. He'd overestimate himself and underestimate the judge. Whichever way I looked I saw only trouble.

The fact we'd known each other

so long made it worse for me. God knows I had no reason to love either Pete Wills or Martin, but it's hard to stand by while men you've been associated with destroy themselves. That's what I saw coming. I wanted to do something about it, but I couldn't think what to do. I guess one reason I'm still a sergeant is I'm not too bright.

The grand jury indicted Pete Willis late that night. We didn't have to go after him. Jack O'Brien surrendered him for booking, and then arranged for bail. No muss, no fuss.

In the morning O'Brien and Pete went in to see Judge Martin at his office. It was an unusual thing for an indicted man to do, but then nothing at all was usual about this case. The secretary and the bailiff in the outer office of the judge's chambers said they were in there about half an hour.

When Pete came out his face was beet red and his blue eyes shooting sparks. He looked mad enough to kill with his bare hands. O'Brien was trying, without much effect, to calm him down. They fairly stormed off down the courthouse corridor.

"I never saw Jack O'Brien look like that before," the secretary told the girls on coffee break. "All that smooth, rich legal patina was worn right off. If I didn't know him better, I'd swear he was frightened stiff."

I knew what she meant. I'd

passed the two of them in the lobby as I came in off the street. Red Jack was scared all right.

Pete Willis wasn't. Pete had a look on his face that I recognized, and it scared me. It's the way a hoodlum looks when a brawl gets out of hand. The look he gets when he's smashed his beer glass on the bar and is working his nerve up to go for somebody's throat with the razor-sharp stump. It's a mixture of hate and fear and a crazy, wild lust for blood.

Where Pete and I came from I'd seen that look often enough since I was a boy. It didn't belong in the courthouse lobby or on the face of a captain of detectives. Seeing it there really shook me up.

Within the hour I had my second shock for the day. I'd gone into court to give routine testimony in a wife-beating case. It only took a short time. When I left, I found Judge Martin's bailiff waiting for me in the hall. The judge wanted to see me. I went right up to his chambers.

The secretary passed me right in.

"See if you can help him," she said. "I've never seen him this way before."

As soon as I saw Judge Martin I knew just what she meant. He sat straight up in his chair with both hands gripping the edge of the mahogany desk top until the knuckles showed white. This was a strong man, and the years had

taught him an iron control, but I had watched him for a long, long time. I knew from the cold, set face and the way he veiled his eyes with heavy lids, how hard he fought to keep from breaking up. Something had shaken him right down to the roots.

The judge did not leave me in doubt.

"Matt," he said, "I need help." It wasn't easy for the hanging judge to say it to a sergeant of detectives, but he did.

I said: "I don't know what you mean, Judge."

He kept his voice at an even tone, though it must have taken plenty of will power. "Oh yes you do, Matt. I know how the grape-vine works, and you're smart enough to read between the lines. You know what happened in here this morning, and I know you know. This is no game, Matt. We've known each other since your brother sat next to me in school. Let's put our cards on the table now."

"Whatever you want, Judge," I said.

"I want Pete Willis broken, Matt. I want him broken or dead. You know why. He's a threat to the only thing I've loved since my wife died. More than a threat. He's ruin and destruction for my little girl. She's young, and he shines in her eyes. He wants her; but even if he didn't, he'd take her now to hurt me if for nothing else.

He told me as much today. He means it too. I'll see him in hell first. I will."

"You've already got him, Judge."

He got up with a sudden movement that was like a reflex of inner pain. His face was dark and frozen to mask his heart. "I've not, Matt. You mean the Grand Jury of course. I thought that would do



it. The evidence is all there. He's guilty as Benedict Arnold, and it can be proved. I planned State Prison for a few years. If the cons he'd sent up didn't kill him there, he'd come out broken and discredited. I was sure. But it's not going to work."

That was another shock in a morning of them. I waited for him to explain.

He did. "That young O'Brien. He's broken the case already. Before it came to indictment even. I taught him most of what he knows and I taught him too well. Willis will go free by directed verdict, Matt. No jury will judge him. Even if I'm on the bench I'll have to free him or see an appeals judge overrule me later on."

"I don't understand," I said. "He can be proved guilty. You know he can."

"No, Matt, he can't. I can't admit one word of the evidence. O'Brien's seen to that last night. Pete Willis went into the Grand Jury and saved his neck by admitting everything. He gave a written statement that he waived immunity and testified under provision of City Ordinance 108—32—979B."

"What's that?"

"It's an ordinance passed forty years ago. Most people have forgotten all about it. It says any City Employee will be fired and otherwise disciplined unless he waives immunity voluntarily when called to testify to a grand jury."

"Well? What difference does that make?"

"Enough to let him go free. Not six months ago the Supreme Court in Washington ruled that no evidence obtained by such enforced testimony is legal. It can't be used in court. Such an ordinance violated Willis' civil rights. He talked on everything. He admitted everything we could prove and a lot we couldn't. By doing that he kept us from using any of it."

I swore under my breath. "It makes no sense," I said.

"Maybe not to you, Matt. Today, though, it makes legal sense. Right now no court in the country can go against it. It means that Pete walks free."

"If that's so, how come he got away with it?"

"Murdock is a college prof," the Judge said. "His veniremen are business men, executives, clerks; that sort of thing. Not a lawyer in the lot. The observer from the district attorney's office who was supposed to advise them last night is a young sprout, not dry behind the ears, and a friend of O'Brien's in politics. He was late getting there. Didn't come in till after the testimony started. On purpose? Who knows."

"Then it'll stick in court?"

"It will," he said, "but that's not the point. The point is I've got to have Willis' hide nailed to the wall. I've got to, Matt. I cannot just let him ruin Ruthie's life."

"I see how you feel," I said. "Believe me, Judge. Surely you can get him in time. He won't stop being a crook. He'll make mistakes. You have friends, influence, power."

"Matt," he said suddenly, "I've got all those things. I've got everything but time. Ruthie's just crazy enough about him to marry in a hurry. And I may not be here to help her when she needs me. My heart. I've been going to Doc Murray for two years now. It could be any time—any time at all."

He turned away from the window and I saw his face clearly. It was so like Pete Willis' in the lobby that I flinched. Oh, there were dif-

ferences. This was a stronger and more intelligent man. This one had the usage of power and the habit of success. But his face, too, was twisted with hate and desperate fear. The cultivated mask was slipping and the Ironbound boy looked through. For the first time I realized fully what this meant for him.

"I've got to have him now," he said. "I'll give ten thousand dollars to the man who gives me Pete Willis—dead or alive. I don't care how. There's a captaincy for the cop who pulls him down. Oh, I know you won't go outside the law, Matt. I know. But you're a smart cop. Can't you bring me evidence of something not covered in that testimony? Can't you let the word get out to those not so squeamish as yourself? If you don't, I can."

I got to my feet. "Judge," I said, "I've got to forget you ever said that. For old times' sake. You know that. If I can get evidence against Captain Willis, I'll do it like I would anyone. I don't relish him marrying any nice girl. But that's all. It has to be all. We can't change life by violence, Judge. You know it's wrong to try."

There was more I wanted to say, but I'd already said too much. When he thought it over, he'd never forgive me, I knew.

He fought to pull himself together and almost made it. "All right, Matt. I should have known better. It's just that I can't let this

happen. If I have to kill him myself, I can't."

I went out and left him to his torment. I was sorry for the judge, but I knew he'd made this for himself. If he'd been a different sort of judge, he'd have cut Pete Willis down years ago instead of abetting and using him. If he'd lived in a different life, maybe he could have raised his Ruthie to know better. It was too late now. Somehow it always is. We've got no time machine to go back.

That day the word got round. Judge Martin talked too much—to too many people.

"God help Pete Willis," the grapevine said. "Judge Martin's mad enough to kill him himself."

Apparently the judge was progressively losing control and had been overheard uttering threats. I was surprised. It was out of character, unless there was some secret method in his madness. On the other hand, when a man like that begins to crack up, he sometimes goes all the way in a hurry.

Pete Willis did nothing to help the situation. He talked too much—in bars, as his kind always does—and only managed to pour salt into the open wound. "Who does he think he is?" was the gist of it. "He was born on the same block as my father. His daughter's no better than me. Maybe not as good, if it comes to that and all was known."

I heard that O'Brien was trying.

to shut him up, but without any success. If ever there was a case of a man digging his grave with his own mouth, this was it. The pair of them had reverted to type and were doing the pre-fight formalities like a couple of fighting cocks or the tough young punks they'd once been. Only this time it would be a fight for keeps.

To top it all off the judge's Ruthie was out on the town that night, and confiding to friends that there'd been a terrible row at home. If that's true, and I've no reason to doubt it, that must have settled the judge's purpose for sure.

In spite of everything past I had to pity Judge Martin. The achievements of a lifetime, and they were very real, were about to go down the drain no matter what happened next. If he let Willis go, he'd lose his daughter and what the Chinese would call his "face" at a single stroke.

If he killed Willis, or tried to—or even if someone did it for him after his threats—he faced arrest and trial. They seldom hang judges, but the best he could look for would be a few years in an asylum. Whatever he did, he couldn't win for losing. Unless, that is, he could come up with a miracle. Nobody thought he could.

I wasn't so sorry for Willis. There's nothing worse to my mind than a crooked cop. Whatever came out of this, he'd chosen his

own road. So would Ruthie have chosen, if she went ahead and married him.

When tension builds up beyond a point of no return, it has to break and clear the air. Sooner or later there's got to be an explosion. In this case it was sooner. As Fate would have it, I had to be there to see.

About two in the afternoon I walked out of the courthouse and started down the broad bank of granite steps to the sidewalk. The building is fifty yards in frontage, and the steps cover the whole length. As I started down I saw Judge Martin coming onto the bottom step from the parking lot at my right. I remember hoping he wouldn't want to stop me and talk again.

In almost the same instant I saw Pete Willis and Jack O'Brien turn up on to the steps from the other direction, my left. They must have been having lunch down town. They and the judge were on a crash collision course.

Others saw it too. All over the steps people froze to watch what was coming.

Judge Martin saw the other two first. He hesitated only a second before turning towards them and calling out something I didn't catch. He was very straight and erect. His face was set and white.

Pete Willis was so busy talking that he didn't know what was coming until the judge called out.

Then it was too late to do anything but stand his ground. His shoulders hunched as he got set for action and his face twisted into that crazy look again.

That's when I should have pulled my gun and gone into action. Why I didn't I'll never know. Maybe I just don't want to ever know. I simply stood there and gaped like any fool, and then it was too late for me too.

I got the impression that Judge Martin knew exactly what he was about. He called out again in an angry and peremptory tone. Then his right hand came out of the overcoat pocket, and there was something in it. Even at thirty feet I recognized the blued metal and characteristic shape of one of those little European-made automatic pistols.

Then I did grab for my gun. For the first time in years my thumb hung up trying to get into my coat. I was slow. Why? It doesn't matter now.

Pete and Jack had seen the same as I did. O'Brien dropped flat on the steps and tried to roll down to the sidewalk. All he wanted was to save his own neck. Everybody saw.

Pete Willis was no coward and he reacted true to type. He went for the short-barreled .38 Special he wore in a shoulder holster. He was fast. Before anyone could move, he'd put three 250 grain slugs into Judge Martin's body.



Then I was on top of him and smashed the revolver out of his hand with the barrel of my own gun. Pete Willis just stood there then, looking scared and terribly alone.

"Get a doctor!" I yelled. There was blood all over the front of the judge's expensive, hand tailored overcoat. I went down on my knee beside him where he lay. I knew I couldn't do a thing.

Somehow he pulled himself together out of the torment of shock and pain that held him. His eyes cleared for a moment. His right hand held something out to me. His "gun"—only it wasn't a gun. It was one of those trick cigarette lighters made to look like a gun.

When he'd pulled it, he'd known exactly what would happen.

His eyes flicked to where Pete Willis stood, and I'll swear he started to laugh.

"Take him, Matt," he said somehow. "Take him now. He won't beat this." Then the dark arterial blood came up in his throat and frothed. He died in the ambulance five minutes later.

He was right. With fifty witnesses against Pete Willis, the jury was only out long enough to have a cigarette. Right now he's sweating out a last appeal in Death Row. Judge Martin had pulled off his miracle.

Jack O'Brien would still like to be a judge. I don't think he'll make it. Too many people remember him trying to roll into the gutter

on that afternoon. A story like that sticks to a man worse than a birthmark. I doubt that he'll live it down.

I got the lieutenancy that fell vacant when Bill Roberts was promoted to take Willis' place. One thing still bothers me, though. Why was I so slow that day? Who did I want to see win?

I like to think I backed the real winner. The judge got what he had to have. He finished Pete and got him out of his daughter's life. Considering the state of his bad heart, he probably got it cheap.

It might only have been a few weeks, a year at most, that he had to trade.

Sometimes I wonder why it had to be. The two of them were much alike!

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TOO MUCH EVIDENCE

Somewhere in that room lay the answer to a grisly riddle. Only one man held the key to a death that couldn't happen—and to a killer who wasn't there.

by NEIL HARRINGTON



AT 4:25 on a bright, budding April afternoon, Andrew Murchley walked into the conference room at Evers Enterprises for the last time.

He didn't look at Miss Johnson, the auburn-tinted, rimless-bespectacled secretary who sat, note pad on crossed knee, three discreet yards from the conference table. She looked up at him as he passed her, her eyes rising, first, in disinterested reflex, and then widening in alarm. Her knuckle went to her mouth.

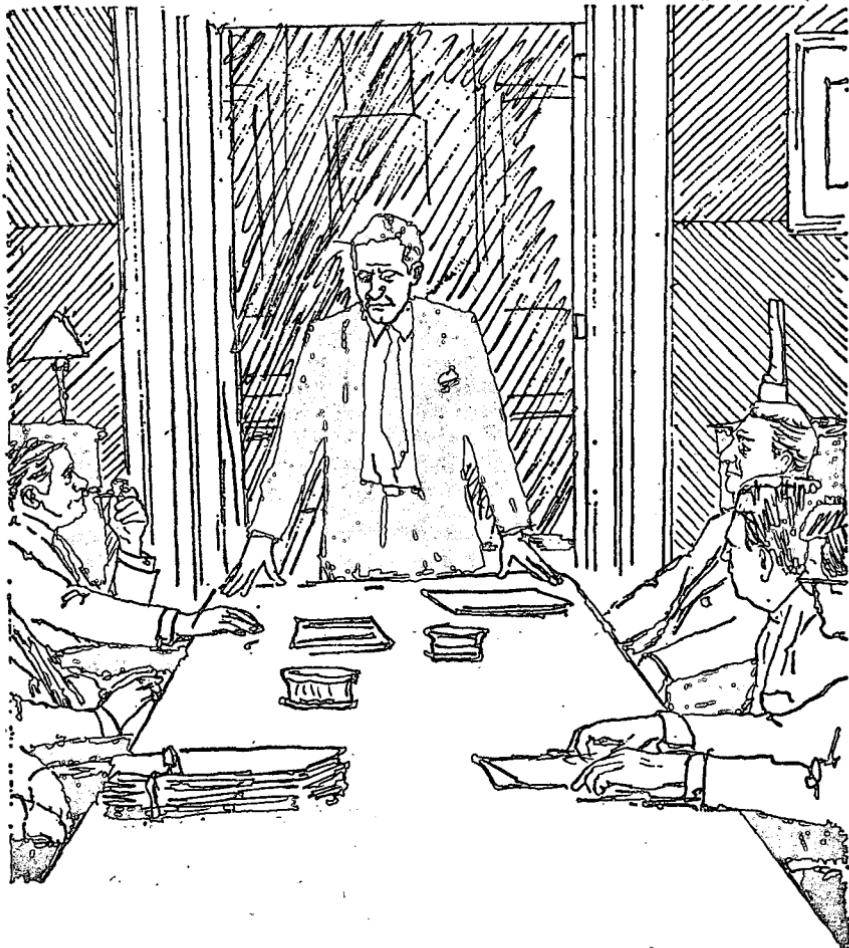
He didn't look at the six executive board members present, three on each side of the long conference table that stretched before

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him. They looked at him, exchanged glances with each other, and slipped more furtive glances in the direction of Jacob Jeremiah Evers, the owner and director of their company, who sat expressionless as a boulder at the head of the table.

They shifted uncomfortably in their seats while they made their individual adjustments to the fact of Murchley's presence, each composing his face in precisely the shade of disapproval and hostility that he felt the situation called for.

Murchley didn't look at any of these. From the moment he had entered the room, his hollow stare



had been fixed on Evers himself, and that stare was returned unblinking by his ex-employer.

For five pregnant seconds they faced each other across the ostentatious eighteen feet of mahogany desk: Evers's charcoal-flanneled bulk filling his oversized swivel

chair, his carefully-manicured hands holding a wooden pencil by the ends, eyes uncommunicative as black glass in his heavy-jowled head.

Murchley, standing at the opposite end of the table, drawn-looking, his slightly stooped frame

somehow vibrant with repressed energy, both hands shoved into the pockets of his shapeless all-weather topcoat, hatless and with his necktie uncentered.

Evers put the pencil down with a faint click that made the six board members' heads pivot in his direction.

"You've been told you're through here, Murchley." The words were delivered in a flat, mechanical voice that somehow went beyond ordinary contempt. "Get out."

Murchley drew his right hand out of its deep pocket with difficulty—something he held caught twice in the cloth—then his hand was free, and they could see he held a pistol. There were exclamatory gasps from the six board members and a shrill squeak from Miss Johnson, who put both hands in front of her face.

Two of the board members sprang backwards to their feet, tipping over their chairs, one of them entangling his leg in the chair of the other and nearly going to the floor with it.

The pistol dominated the room. The ominous black hole of its muzzle looked big enough to put a thumb into.

Evers seemed perfectly unalarmed.

"You're trespassing, Murchley," he said in the same flat voice. "Get out."

Murchley raised the pistol

slowly until it was at the level of his eyes, slanting slightly downward, pointing at Evers's shirt front.

To the board members and Miss Johnson, most of whom were recalling, with agonizing clarity, various news accounts of mass murders, Evers's fearlessness seemed inhuman. To Jacob Jeremiah Evers, the situation was merely annoying, and his only real concern was that he must not give his fired employee the satisfaction of knowing that he had succeeded in annoying J. J. Evers.

Evers's lifelong working philosophy was based on the precept that one must never back down before a threat. To Evers, any contest on any ground became ultimately a battle of personalities, victory inevitably going to the toughest, sharpest and most aggressive.

The Murchleys of the world were losers, and neither guns in their hands nor any other crutches would change that. Murchley's incredibly juvenile display represented no real danger, in Evers's quick judgment, but the effrontery of it was annoying.

Over the sights of the gun, Murchley's eyes seemed to be trained on Evers's plain gold tie clip.

"Murchley, if you're not off the company grounds in one minute I'm going to call the security guards to remove you. Not just to

the gates, Murchley, Downtown to the police—”

In the confined space of the room, the report of the pistol was deafening.

Evers's chair swiveled slightly so that the black marbles of his eyes peered into the face of his business manager, Brindal, who sat in a state of paralysis.

To Brindal, it seemed that Evers had been punched in by the bullet's impact; he looked suddenly and strangely deflated; blood pumped thickly and with glistening brightness from a point just under his tie clip, soaked his great shirtful of belly, streamed into his lap.

The exact moment of clinical death is of only academic importance. For all practical purposes, Jacob Jeremiah Evers was dead before he had time to be surprised.

“IT SEEMS *impossible*,” said Alexander Fallon the next afternoon, tilting back his swivel chair and making a tent of his fingertips, “that you should be coming to me for help with the Evers murder. Surely the case presents no difficulties, even to a prosecutor of your stunted ability.”

His visitor, W. Edgar Bunceworth, prosecuting attorney for Eastfield County, was satisfied for the moment to manage a vaguely deprecating chuckle and make an elaborate job of sucking a match

flame into his pot-bowled briar pipe.

He knew that he was in for a somewhat painful time. His low opinion of private detectives generally was well established, and, to him, the abrasive Fallon was about the least likeable of the breed.

Bunceworth was here only because he had no choice: he needed a detective who was also a ballistics expert, and Alexander Fallon was the only such combination he knew.

“According to the morning paper,” Fallon went on, “this Murchley simply walked into a conference room at Evers Enterprises and shot Evers to death in front of seven witnesses.”

“One shot through the heart from a forty-five automatic,” Bunceworth mumbled around the stem of his pipe.

“That would do it,” Fallon said judiciously. “Then, still according to the paper, Murchley walked out of the room, sat down in an adjoining anteroom, and read a magazine until the police arrived.”

“An article on the progress of light industry in Yugoslavia.”

“Your ability to retain trivia is amazing. That vital fact was not mentioned in the newspaper. Also there was nothing about motive.”

“Well, we don't know whether Murchley had a motive or not, but from what several Evers employees have told us, it's certain

that he thought he had one."

"That's the same thing, in effect."

"Murchley had been employed by Evers for about twelve years. He had a fairly good job in the stock-control department. About two months ago, possibly more, he began voicing suspicions to his co-workers that his wife was meeting Evers secretly!"

"Not secretly enough, it seems."

"Well, apparently nobody really knows whether his suspicions were correct or not. He'd had the same idea before, about other men. At any rate, he blew up one day, three weeks ago, and accused Evers in front of several other employees."

"That's when he got canned."

"Right. He hasn't been able to get a job since, and is convinced that Evers blacklisted him. Of course, his prospects would have been rough anyway, since he couldn't give any employment references other than Evers for the past twelve years. Then, last week—"

"More misery?"

"His wife left him."

"Ah."

"She went back to her home town, someplace in the Midwest but friends of Murchley's say he was convinced that Evers was somehow connected with her leaving."

"All in all, the whole thing sounds pretty ordinary as mur-

ders go. You've got Murchley in custody now."

Bunceworth gripped his pipe-stem with his teeth and nodded.

"And of course you've got the corpse."

The prosecutor narrowed his eyes and nodded again.

"And the gun," Fallon went on, "and the witnesses."

Another nod.

"And somehow, with all that, you've still managed to flub the case hopelessly."

Bunceworth's face darkened; he took the pipe out of his mouth and cleared his throat.

"Nothing like that," he said. "But there is one minor point that needs clearing up before I'll be able to go to trial."

"Minor point my gluteus maximus!" And lapsing into a thick, inaccurate Irish brogue, an occasional affectation of his that irritated Bunceworth almost beyond endurance: "You're stuck for fair, Edgar darlin', or you wouldn't be comin' for my help 'in a thousand years!"

"Murchley," the prosecutor said in a controlled voice, "claims he did not shoot Evers."

"Ah! And has he an honest face? Then scrap the evidence and let him go."

"The thing is—we have a little too much evidence."

"Too much? Offends your sense of fairness, is that it?"

"Part of the evidence," said

Bunceworth, a pulse beating visibly at his temple, "seems to prove conclusively that Murchley could not possibly have fired the fatal shot."

Fallon leaned his elbows on his desk.

"But seven people saw him do just that," he said patiently.

"Oh, there's no question that he fired. He admits that freely. But he insists that he was only trying to frighten Evers; that he aimed just past Evers's head."

Fallon snorted. "So he goofed. He didn't get him just past the head; he got him slap bang through the ticker. Sounds like he's trying to get off with a manslaughter charge."

"By making it appear that he hit Evers accidentally? Quite the contrary. He says he shoots regularly in pistol competition and holds an Expert classification, and that he also was rated Expert with the forty-five when he was in the Army. Says he couldn't possibly have hit what he wasn't aiming for at that distance."

"He says this, he says that. What about that business of too much evidence you mentioned before?"

"The bullet the pathologist removed from Ever's corpse in autopsy—it came from some other gun. It was from a forty-five automatic, all right, but not Murchley's."

Fallon's eyebrows shot up.



"It took you long enough to get to it," he said. "So that's why you can't put this thing together. You've got all the parts, but you can't get the square peg in the round hole, so to speak."

Bunceworth nodded, thinking to himself that Fallon's metaphor was as tedious as his bogus brogue.

"He switched guns," Fallon suggested, "before the police arrived."

Bunceworth shook his head unhappily. "We can rule that out absolutely."

"'Absolutely' is pretty strong talk. The alternative would seem to be that someone else fired the fatal shot simultaneous with Murchley's shot."

"That seems to be the alternative."

"It's a pretty hard alternative to

swallow. For one thing, it implies that someone else knew exactly what Murchley was going to do, and was able to fire a precise shot at the same instant, while somehow going unnoticed by the rest of the people in the room—if, of course, this hypothetical murderer was in the room.”

“Well, all the attention was on Murchley—”

“I can’t imagine a murderer depending on that so completely.”

“And it wouldn’t have had to be exactly the same instant. Everyone was literally deafened by the shot—all of them still had a ringing in the ears this morning. A second shot might not have been heard.”

“If it followed very closely. It still sticks in my throat. Where did Murchley’s bullet go, if there were two shots?”

“Out the window.”

Fallon rolled his eyes at the ceiling.

“Look,” said Bunceworth, “I can make the whole situation more clear if you’ll come out to the scene of the crime with me.”

“Ah, ‘scene o’ the crime,’ is it? I can tell you’re a pro by the way you talk. Good enough. While we’re there maybe we’ll re-enact the crime, which is another apt phrase. You can be Evers.”

“Before we go,” said Bunceworth, hoisting a gray steel evidence case onto his lap, “I want you to look over the—weapon.”

He had almost said “murder weapon.”

“Bring it along, Edgar darlin’,” said Fallon, standing. “I’m dying to see the scene of the crime.”

WHEN THEY passed through the door of the conference room, Fallon stopped so abruptly that Bunceworth walked into his back.

“Uck!” Fallon choked, his hand moving involuntarily to his nose. “What’s that? Blood! Stale blood.” There are few things in nature that smell more nauseating than a quantity of blood spilled the day before.

“They’ve cleaned the floor,” said Bunceworth, “but Evers’s chair is still here. It was pretty well soaked—he bled like a stuck pig. They’ll be taking it out this afternoon.”

Fallon walked the length of the conference table to look at the victim’s swivel chair. The thickly padded leader back was clean, but the seat was caked and crusted with a black-brown mess.

“Ah! That’s too much,” said Fallon, taking his nose between thumb and forefinger.

“You can see that large window is right behind the chair,” Bunceworth pointed out. “It’s closed now, but it was wide open all day yesterday, the employees say. Because of the nice weather.”

Fallon replied nasally: “Let’s open it today, too,” and released his nose so that he could use both

hands to heave the sash to its limit.

"No screen. It's too early in the year for bugs," said Buncsworth. "A bullet missing Evers's head would go through the open window without leaving a trace."

Fallon had his head and shoulders out the window and was taking deep breaths. They were on the third floor of Evers Enterprises administration building. Stretched out before Fallon were the parking lot, the flat roofs of two small buildings of uncertain purpose, a wire fence, a hundred yards or so of unkempt field, and then a deep pine woods.

"Not much point in looking for a bullet out there," he said.

Buncsworth, as much repelled by the smell of rancid gore as Fallon, had come no farther into the room than the beginning of the conference table, some ten feet from the door. He put his evidence case on the table, unlocked it and swung back the lid.

"Will you look at the gun now?" he asked.

Fallon shrugged and walked back toward him.

"This is an awfully long conference table for so few people," he observed. "I suppose the board members were all sitting at this end, near Evers?"

"Right," Buncsworth said. "Three on each side."

"And the secretary?"

"Miss Johnson? She was back

here, just to the right of the door as you come in."

"Pretty much out of things, wasn't she? Practically in the corner. Had she been behaving badly, or what?"

"No, this was her usual place during meetings of the executive board. She didn't take notes through the meetings, but had to be present in case something should occur to Evers. Normally she had little or nothing to do at these times."

"Sounds boring."

"Well, here's the gun." He passed a heavy automatic pistol to Fallon. "Go ahead and handle it. It's empty and it's been dusted for prints."

Fallon pulled the slide back to make sure the chamber and magazine were empty, and turned the weapon over in his hands. It was a standard Service pistol, the Model 1911A1.

"You're sure this is the weapon Murchley used?"

"Positively. Registered to him, covered with his fingerprints, the only gun in his possession when he was arrested, and it had been recently fired."

"What does recently fired mean? I've heard that expression a hundred times and never have understood it."

"I don't know," said Buncsworth, taken aback. "Fired within the hour, I suppose."

"I hope you don't try an answer

like that on a sharp defense attorney."

"Well, I'm just repeating what the officer said who brought in the gun."

"He probably knows as much about guns as you do. Stuck the muzzle in his nostril, got a whiff of burnt nitrocellulose, and relieved himself of the expert opinion that it had been recently fired. Let me tell you something: *no one*, by judging the freshness of a gun barrel's bouquet or by any other means, can say for certain whether that gun was fired an hour ago or yesterday. There are too many variables."

"That doesn't make any difference. We have plenty of evidence that this is the gun Murchley used in this room."

"Let's get to all your evidence in due course. First, I want to be able to visualize the shooting through the same little anteroom we did, of course."

"Right. It's the only way in or out."

"Where was he standing when he fired?"

"Right here, at this end of the table."

"And Evers was at the other end. Twenty feet or so away."

"About that. The table is eighteen feet long."

Fallon shook the heavy automatic beside his head. It made a dull thunking sound.

"Loose as a goose," he said.

"What do you mean? It's worn out or something?"

"No, the Service pistol is normally loosely fitted. One of the reasons it's not particularly accurate."

"Not accurate enough to hit a man in the heart at this distance?"

"Oh, accurate enough for that. Still, that's pretty good shooting with a Service model. Horrible trigger on these things. Not too much for a man with an Expert classification, though."

"He took his time. Aimed very deliberately. Miss Johnson, sitting behind Murchley and to his right when he fired, was hit on the forehead with the shell ejected from his gun. Woman was hysterical when the police arrived—insisted she'd been shot."

"And that empty cartridge case is your proof that this is the weapon Murchley used in this room."

"Yes. Bellini, the State ballistics man who did the identification work, says that the empty shell ejected from an automatic pistol can be matched to the gun it came from just as positively as the bullet."

"Quite true."

"I've got the murder bullet and the shell from Murchley's gun here with me . . ."

"Exhibits 'B' and 'C,' eh? Do you expect me to check Bellini's work?"

"Of course."

"Forget it. I know Bellini; he's competent and careful. If he says

the empty case matches Murchley's pistol and the bullet does not, then that's it."

"Then either somebody else shot Evers, or Murchley somehow managed to change bullets in mid-flight," Bunceworth said crossly.

"No other empties found in the room?"

"None."

"Doesn't necessarily mean anything, of course. There are revolvers chambered for the same cartridge, and they don't eject their empties when they're fired as automatic pistols do . . . But a forty-five revolver is a huge thing. The board members so close together, and the secretary sitting there in plain sight of all—obviously Evers was hit above table level—No, no, I can't go for it."

"Couldn't a cartridge have been fired by some device other than a conventional gun? Small enough to be concealed?"

"That's getting into the realm of pure Mickey Mouse. Yes, there are fountain-pen guns, and, even smaller, the 'assassination sticks' used by the O.S.S. in the Second World War—but all those are chambered for cartridges of much smaller caliber. The recoil of the forty-five cartridge is pretty jarring when fired in a two-and-a-half-pound pistol—anybody who fired one from a pen-sized device would have to come out of it with a broken hand."

"No, if the murderer was in this



room it was Murchley. Could he have picked up the ejected empty and substituted another before leaving the room?"

"You still think he switched guns on us."

"I'm still considering it as a possibility."

"No soap. He fired, turned on his heel, and went back out the door into the anteroom. Nothing else. As a matter of fact, when the shell bounced off Miss Johnson's forehead it fell in her lap. She brushed it off because she thought it would explode or something—but only after Murchley left the room; she was too petrified to move before then."

"Well, so much for that idea," Fallon grumbled. "The door closed behind Murchley—I see it has one of those air-valve gadgets—and then what happened?"

"One of the board members used that telephone up there to call the company's security guards and then the police. They stayed right here, all of them. They didn't know Murchley was waiting right outside in the anteroom, but none of them had the nerve to go to the door anyway."

"The security guards arrived first, obviously. How long did that take?"

"Two or three minutes. The one in the lobby who took the call had to get his buddy, who was just outside the building. They ran up both flights of stairs. Not over three minutes."

"And they found Murchley in the anteroom, lapping up that racy stuff about Yugoslavian light industry."

"He didn't resist at all. Very pleasant about the whole thing. The gun was on the table beside him, still cocked and loaded. One cartridge in the chamber and five in the magazine, indicating that one shot had been fired, since, as I understand it, the capacity of this pistol is seven cartridges."

"Ordinarily. Actually, it will hold eight, if the chamber is loaded before the full magazine is inserted, which, however, is not the usual procedure. Well, let's go look at the anteroom. I haven't gotten anything out of this place but a queasy stomach from the stench."

The anteroom gave the impres-

sion almost of being a converted closet, partly because of its small size—about six feet square—and partly because it was without windows.

The only light came from a flush ceiling fixture.

When the door closed behind them, Fallon turned and pressed the fingertips of his left hand against it. It moved open very slowly and with complete silence under his pressure. He moved his hand so that his thumb was against the door jamb and his little finger against the door, the door then being open a space of about eight inches.

Then he laid the automatic, which he still held in his right hand, across the knuckles of his left, so that the weapon was braced and pointing into the conference room.

"I still don't like the second-gunner theory," he said, "but this is my week for open-mindedness. Now if I were that hypothetical killer . . . I can see Evers's swivel chair perfectly over the sights, and, since the door jamb is about two feet off the center line of the table, I suppose that Murchley, standing at its near end, would not obscure my aim . . . If I fired when Murchley fired, my empty would be ejected back into this room; I could pick it up and be out of here, if I moved smartly, before Murchley reached this door . . . Well, it's possible."

"No, it's not," said Buncsworth.

"Why not?"

"I haven't told you about the janitor and the three cleaning women."

"Save the dirty jokes for later."

"No joke. There's a large utility room on this floor, just about thirty feet down the corridor, and the janitor and cleaning women were there. It was nearly quitting time and they were putting their cleaning stuff away and sort of standing around gossiping about one thing or another. Anyway, they saw Murchley come into this anteroom about four twenty-five, and a minute or so later they heard the shot."

"What did they do?"

"Nothing. They didn't know what to do. They didn't know for sure what the sound was, and they weren't about to go busting in on a meeting of the company's bosses. They were trying to decide whether they should call the security guards—which could have gotten them in trouble, they felt, if it turned out to be something that was none of their business—when the guards came storming up. The point is: they were watching the door to this anteroom the whole time, and neither Murchley nor anyone else came out before the guards arrived."

"Are there any other little items like that that you're saving up to hit me with at the appropriate time?"

"No, I guess you've got the whole story now. It pretty much tears up the second-gunman hypothesis, doesn't it?"

"And brings us right back to old Murch."

"There's certainly no place in here where anyone else could have hidden."

Fallon looked around the little room and nodded. There was a single chrome-framed, vinyl-upholstered chair and a table just large enough to contain two news magazines, a glass ashtray and a small ceramic vase stuffed with plastic flowers. A Renoir reproduction hung on one wall in a poorly chosen ornate frame. There was no closet.

"Fresh out of ideas?" asked Buncsworth, who got a certain perverse satisfaction out of seeing Fallon baffled, even though it left his own situation unimproved.

Fallon, ignoring the question and mawkishly humming a pseudo-Irish tune, stepped over to the Renoir reproduction and moved a corner of the frame so that he could see behind it.

"I don't suppose Murchley had anything unusual on him when your people picked him up," he said.

"Like what?"

"Like anything unusual."

"Well—keys, wallet, change."

"Never mind," said Fallon, looking around the room again.

"You are stumped," said

Bunceworth with a malicious smile.

Fallon grunted. "It occurs to me," he said, "that we haven't mentioned my fee."

The prosecutor laughed aloud. "No, we haven't, and there hardly seems any point—"

"Out of a deep sense of civic responsibility, I'll forgo my usual minimum, and bill only for my daily rate of one hundred dollars. No charge," Fallon added magnanimously, "for expenses."

"What expenses?" Bunceworth exploded. "We came here in my car. Ha! Wouldn't you love to con me out of a hundred dollars of taxpayers' money for an hour's worth of nothing!"

"Ah. Nothing, is it? I'm offering you a first-degree murder conviction and you call it nothing."

"Against whom?" Bunceworth looked uncertain.

"Murchley, of course. Isn't that your problem?"

"You realize I'd have to prove premeditation for first degree."

"I do have a rudimentary grasp of the law," said Fallon with a pained expression.

"But I wonder if you realize how hard it is to get a first-degree conviction these days. Even if proof existed that Murchley killed Evers—and you, yourself, accept scientific evidence which seems to prove he couldn't have—there would still be the possibility that he came here only to frighten

or threaten Evers, and changed his mind at the last instant."

"That's a bit far-fetched."

"You'd be surprised how many juries would go for it," grumbled the prosecutor, "or at least be uncertain enough to refuse to give guilty in first."

"Me boast still stands, Edgar darlin'."

"What would I have to take into court? Your intuition?"

"Evidence."

"Physical evidence?"

"Evidence you can tie an 'Exhibit D' tag on and hold up in front of a jury."

"Where is it?"

Fallon grinned.

"You know the law on withholding evidence," Bunceworth gritted.

"I'm not withholding evidence," Fallon pointed out, spreading his hands. "I'm withholding only my genius, the fruits of which are yours for one hundred bananas."

"All right, you unconscionable thief. It's a deal—if you can deliver."

Fallon held up the heavy automatic. "Listen," he said, and shook it so that it clunked gently.

"I know," said Bunceworth impatiently. "Loose as a goose."

"Yes, but why?"

"What do you mean? You said that was normal."

"And so it is." Fallon kept shaking the pistol.

"What are you getting at?" the

prosecutor shouted in exasperation. "Is something hidden in the gun? Is that it? *Something's hidden in the gun!*"

Fallon smiled mysteriously. "Shall we see?" He turned to the small table and moved the ashtray and flower-stuffed vase to make room. Then his fingers flew over the pistol, familiarly. He popped out the magazine; pushed here and twisted there, and a spring stuck out at the front; eased back the slide and pulled out a lever.

In a moment the weapon was broken down into an assortment of parts before Bunceworth's uncomprehending eyes. Fallon looked up with a blank expression.

"Well?" demanded the prosecutor. "I don't know what all that stuff is. Is anything there?"

Fallon shrugged. "Only those things which are usually found in the innards of the Service pistol."

Bunceworth's shoulders slumped. "Well then?"

"Since it's all apart, this will be a good time to give you a little useful background in the science of forensic ballistics."

"I don't want a useful background in—"

"This," said Fallon, holding up a five-inch steel tube, "is the barrel."

"I don't care about the—"

"Look through the bore. See those spiral grooves? They com-

prise the rifling, which spins the bullet so as to give it stability in flight. Are they smooth?"

"Beautifully smooth. But I don't—"

"No, they're not. They look smooth, but actually they contain marks too fine to be seen readily with the naked eye, which leave faint scratches on the jacket of the bullet—a characteristic pattern of scratches, called the 'signature,' which is as peculiar to that particular barrel as a finger-print is to a man."

"I understand about that," said Bunceworth. "If an evidence bullet is put under a comparison microscope with a test bullet, an expert can tell quite easily whether they were fired from the same gun barrel."

"Exactly. Now look at this," Fallon said, picking up the slide and pointing to part of its inner surface. "This is the face of the breech, which is pressed against the head of the cartridge when the pistol is loaded. Is it smooth?"

"No," said Bunceworth sourly. "It contains machining marks too fine to be seen with the naked eye."

"Very good. You're coming along nicely. When the cartridge is fired, the pressure of the powder gases—about fifteen thousand pounds per square inch in this example—forces the relatively soft brass of the cartridge case back against the breech so that it

receives a faint impression of those marks.

"In addition, the head of the case is slightly dented and bunged up by the extractor, ejector and firing pin—all of which abuse gives the empty case *its* 'signature.'"

"All right. So we can put empty shells under the comparison microscope too. So what?"

Fallon put down the slide and turned a withering look on the prosecutor. Taking the small vase from the table, he plucked the artificial flowers from it and, with a flourish, threw them up in the air.

"Have you gone out of your mind?" gasped Bunceworth.

Without answering, Fallon inverted the vase over the table.

A five-inch steel tube fell out of it.

"About the only place it could have been," murmured Fallon.

"What's that?"

"Don't touch! Fingerprints! Can't you see? It's another barrel."

The prosecutor sat down weakly.

"The Service pistol," Fallon said, "is loosely fitted so as to ensure that all its parts will be com-

pletely *interchangeable*, which makes for ease of repair in the field. You can buy all the forty-five barrels you want for six or seven dollars apiece, surplus, and any of them will interchange with any other Service pistol barrel. As you've seen, it takes only a few seconds to field-strip the pistol, and not much longer to reassemble it.

"Murchley's two or three minutes alone in the anteroom gave him more than enough time to change the murder barrel for an innocent one. A test comparison of fired cartridge cases, of course, still proved that his gun was the one fired in the conference room, since the case gets its signature from parts other than the barrel What's the matter?"

Bunceworth looked distinctly ill.

"What's the matter?" repeated Fallon. "You've got first degree sewed up tight! The fact that Murchley came here prepared to switch barrels proves premeditation."

"I'm not worried about getting the conviction," said the prosecutor. "I'm wondering how I'll explain paying an outside consultant one hundred dollars an hour!"

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THE GUILTSTONE DAGGER

by
**JONATHAN
CRAIG**



*What makes a killer? I knew, only too well.
For I had seen the blood red banner of guilt
on her—where no man would dare to find it.*

WHEN HARRY PALMER let himself into the apartment at a few minutes after three that day, there was something about the grim set of his blunt young face that caused his wife's welcoming smile to cloud for a moment.

"Home so early, dear?" she said as she closed her book and rose to kiss him. "I thought you expected to be there all afternoon."

Harry put his Rolleiflex and accessories bag on the coffee table and drew his wife down on the

couch beside him. There was almost as much photographic equipment scattered about the apartment as there was in Harry's studio.

"I took a couple hundred record shots," he said. "Just for cataloguing. Art stuff, mostly. Cult objects. Small artifacts. The usual."

"Did Mr. Nicholson bring back as much from Africa as he did last time?"

"No. Listen, Joyce—"

"You look—oh, I don't know—determined about something."

"I am. I think I know a way to make Stella tip her hand, Joyce."

"Oh, Harry. Not *that* again."

"Why not *that* again? You think I'm going to let her get away with it?"

"But she didn't do it, Harry," Joyce said with tried patience. "Can't you understand that? You've no reason in the world to suspect her. Even the police—"

"The police don't care one way or the other," Harry said. "But I know she killed him. And before I'm finished with her, she's going to know I know it. I'll have that satisfaction, at least."

"Harry, really. You've let this thing warp your mind. Some woman did take a butcher knife and stab your best friend to death, yes. But not Stella, Harry. Wade Mitchell was a good-looking bachelor with a lot of women friends. It just happens that we know one of them, and that she happens to be Stella. She—"

"What about that vicious temper of hers?" Harry said. "She was jealous enough of Wade to do anything. She was crazy about him. And we both heard her say she'd kill him before she gave him up, don't forget."

"She was just *talking*, Harry," Joyce said. "If everyone who ever said anything like that actually did it, there'd simply be no one left alive."

"She killed him," Harry said. "You just can't admit it to your-

self, that's all. She's as good a friend of yours as Wade was of mine. Friendship blinds, so you—"

"We've been over and over this," Joyce said. "For almost a month now you've done nothing but brood about what happened to Wade Mitchell. If you ask me, he got just about what he deserved."

"That's a hell of a thing to say, Joyce."

"You talk about friendship blinding. Well, what about the way Wade treated women? Just as soon as he was sure he had a girl in love with him, he'd drop her for someone else. I've seen at least five or six different girls out there in the hall, on their way to his apartment.

"And those are just the ones I happened to see while I was waiting for the elevator. He must have had dozens, Harry."

"What's that got to do with anything?" Harry said. "Wade was the best friend I ever had. The only real friend, actually. All through the Army, we—"

Joyce sighed.

"Yes, I know," she said. "All through the Army. And all the things you did together afterward. And—"

"The guy next door to Wade—what's his name?—Jordan. Jordan said he heard Wade tell someone to get out and stay out. And then he heard a woman's voice. Stella's voice. Stella, who lived right across the hall from him."

"Harry, please. Mr. Jordan didn't say it was Stella's voice. He merely said it was a woman's voice. He couldn't even make out what she said, much less whose voice it was. Don't you remember? You're letting this thing distort—"

"I'll get her," Harry said softly. "Tonight."

"You'll what? Harry, what are you talking about?"

"I'll do it with this," Harry said as he took a small tissue-wrapped object from his pocket. "Nicholson lent it to me this afternoon while I was shooting the stuff he brought back from Africa. You might say I talked him out of it."

He opened the tissue and held up a small white dagger, not much longer than his index finger.

"What on earth?" Joyce said.

"This is carved out of guiltstone," Harry said. "Nicholson brought it back with him from Africa."

"Did you say guiltstone?"

"That's right," Harry said, smiling tightly at the dagger as he twisted it around slowly in his fingers. "Guiltstone. That's what they use to find murderers with."

"Who does?"

"This tribe in Africa somewhere. I forget which one Nicholson said it was, but this is what they use. Or rather, the *shaman*, the medicine man does."

"How?"

"When the murderer touches it,

it turns blood red. Red for the blood of the murdered man. That's why they call it guiltstone. It proves guilt."

His wife stared at him incredulously. "Harry, have you lost your mind?" she said. "Are you asking me to believe—"

"Of course not," Harry said. "But the members of this particular tribe in Africa believe it. That's the whole point, Joyce; they believe it. When someone's been murdered, the medicine man makes all the members of the tribe stand in a circle. Then he goes to each one in turn and orders him to hold the dagger. The guilty person is so terrified that he can't touch it. That's how he gives himself away."

"That's absurd, Harry. You can't mean you intend to—No, you couldn't possibly. Not try something like that on Stella."

"That's what I intend to do, exactly," Harry said. "And what's so absurd about a bunch of primitives believing in it? Is it any more absurd than the way Stella believes in horoscopes and ouija boards? She hasn't got a brain in her head, Joyce. Who is it goes at least twice a week to seances and fortune tellers?"

"Harry—"

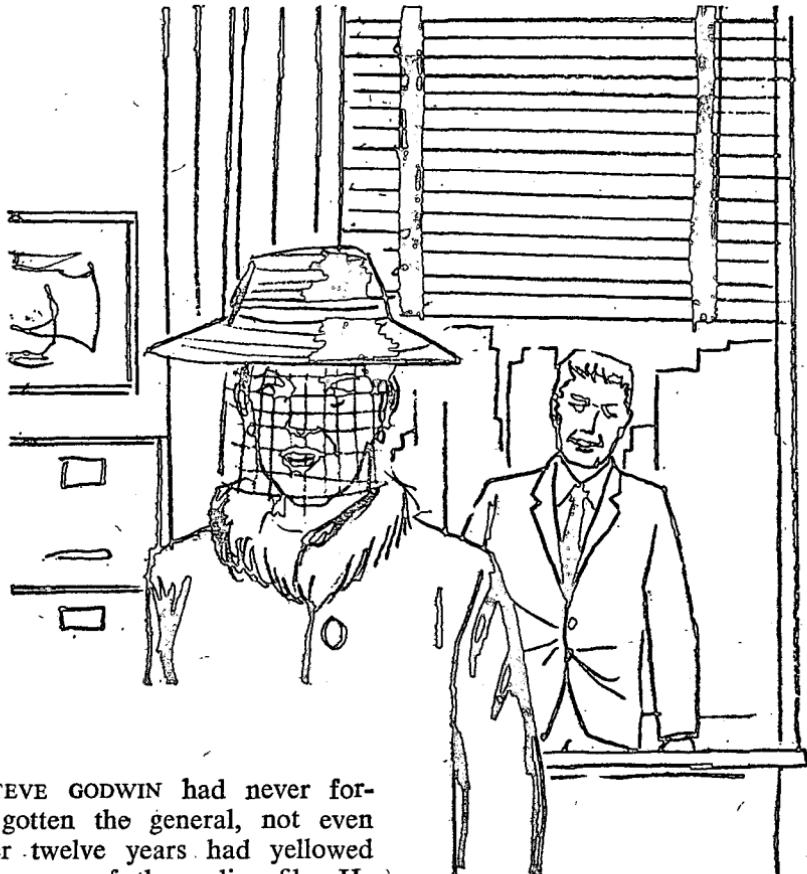
"Stella's as superstitious as they come. When I give her a good sales pitch about this little dagger, and then try to hand it to her, her

(Please turn to Page 128)

Death of a General

*For her, the glory of Tomorrow. For the
man from Yesterday there was—death. Who
had killed the grey general? And why?*

by HENRY SLESAR



STEVE GODWIN had never forgotten the general, not even after twelve years had yellowed the pages of the police file. He

had been a brash young acting lieutenant of police when the general was murdered, and his death, still a mystery and still unavenged, lingered in Godwin's memory like the rankling of a bad and half-forgotten dream. Sometimes, that memory would be stirred by the sight of a bridal gown in a dress shop, by an almost-familiar face passed in the street, by a spoken word dropped idly in conversation.

He was a full captain now, no longer slim and eager, and far more dependent upon his political agility. He was prepossessing only behind his office desk, handling his telephone and typewriter with the same competence with which he had once handled firearms. His face and body had become softly rounded over the years, his hair grayer, his ice-blue eyes thawed.

But there was structural steel in Steve Godwin still, and on the afternoon of March 14th, twelve years after the death of the general, he showed his hidden strength.

There was luck involved, of course. He happened to lunch at White's that noon, and Cornell Meyers happened to be at an adjoining table. Meyers was a successful criminal lawyer, not so much a friend as he was an adversary. He waved to Godwin when their eyes met, and paused by his table before going out.

Steve Godwin listened to his chatter without absorbing it, until

Gloria Knapp's name was mentioned. Then he said: "What was that? About Gloria Knapp?"

"I said, it's a darn shame. Lovely girl like that. Her husband's heartbroken about it. Say, come to think of it, you were at their wedding, weren't you?"

"Not exactly as a guest."

"Oh, yes. I remember now; that general business."

"Say it again," Godwin prompted. "What's happened to Gloria Knapp?"

"Nervous breakdown," Meyers said. "Guess that's the polite word. Think they've taken her to Silver Hill, or someplace. Well, I've got to run, Steve. See you in court."

The captain thought about Gloria Knapp all the way back to his office, and then sent someone to the homicide files for a copy of the police report dated 6/10/45. For the first time in years, he let his mind relive the events of Gloria's wedding day.

It had been a cold day for June, and the morning haze had failed to burn off by nine o'clock. The clouds overhead released a fine drizzle, and the weather reports were pessimistic. But Mrs. Margaret Randy, the widowed mother of the bride, had been prepared for a bad turn of weather, and busily instructed the workmen and caterers assembled in her modest White Plains home to start moving the wedding trimmings indoors.

She was disappointed, of course.

Mrs. Randy had always visualized an outdoor wedding for Gloria, complete with smiling sun and bird choruses and frilly white dresses on the garden path. But she was too busy and too happy to let the weather affect her. For in her fondest dreams, she had never dared to hope that Gloria would lead such a prize bachelor to the altar as Wally Knapp.

Mrs. Randy was a short woman, with young, pretty features embedded in a plump face. She moved so rapidly within her trailing ivory satin gown that she appeared to have wheels instead of feet. She was everywhere at once, arranging flowers, instructing maids, pinning hems, chastising the bridesmaids, calming the soprano, and cooing over her daughter's loveliness.

It was that loveliness, after all, which was responsible for this festive day. Gloria Randy was a tall, lithe girl with enormous dark eyes and a rosebud mouth. She was well-educated without being overly intelligent, and she was rarely described by anyone without the word "sweet" entering the conversation.

She had accepted the courtship of Wally Knapp simply and graciously, without surprise at the difference in their economic status. She never thought much about money, even if her mother—widowed, and with a shrinking source of income—thought of little else.

Wally wasn't a "catch" to Gloria, as he was to Mrs. Randy. He was simply a handsome boy who danced well, and whose conversation never strained her mental powers.

By ten o'clock all the arrangements had been completed for an indoor ceremony. With an hour to go before the sound of Lohengrin, Mrs. Randy hurried to her daughter's room to survey her progress.

Gloria was lovely. Her gown was white silk taffeta, embroidered with pearls. Her long veil of Belgian lace was arranged Mantilla fashion. Her bouquet consisted of eucharis lilies and stephanotis. She stood calm and poised before the full-length mirror, in contrast to the fluttering bridesmaids tugging at her skirt, her sleeves, her hair. Mrs. Randy chased them away, and fluttered at her daughter herself.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Knapp entered the bedroom, and Mrs. Randy greeted Gloria's future-mother-in-law with fulsome delight.

Mrs. Knapp was a hard-faced, practical woman much concerned with dignity, and the soft flowers on her blue sequined dress failed to soften her craggy features. If Mrs. Knapp was displeased at her son's choice, she never made it apparent. She liked Gloria, but it was also evident that she understood Gloria's mother.

The two mothers left the bride's room together. They were just entering the front room when a bristling, bald-headed man from the caterers approached them nervously.

"Pardon me," he said. "I thought I should tell you this, Mrs. Randy. You see, I was just outside on the terrace, when I saw this man—"

"What man?" Mrs. Randy said.

"Perhaps it's nothing—"

"What man?" Mrs. Knapp repeated frostily.

"I'm sorry. It seemed to strange to me then, but now I realize it wasn't anything. It was just a man in a gray uniform. Come to think of it, he might have been the postman."

"On Sunday?" Mrs. Knapp said. "What are you talking about?"

Mrs. Randy blinked at him. "I don't understand you, Mr. Meecham."

"Well, he looked suspicious, that's all. I couldn't see much of him; he appeared to be peeping out of the bushes towards the house. He was wearing a gray hat, gray jacket, that's all I could make out. I thought I should tell you."

Mrs. Randy looked helpless, and Wally's mother took command.

"Tell one of the servants to look around," she snapped. "Then come back and tell us what's happened."

"Yes, madam."

"Thank you, Lydia," Mrs. Ran-

dy said softly, and it was the first time she had addressed this imposing woman by her given name.

Mrs. Knapp accepted it in good grace, and they went off together to consult with old Dr. Edwin Longstreet, who was to perform the marriage.

A few minutes later, Meecham appeared again.

"He seems to be gone," he said. "But some of the other people saw him, too. He was definitely in uniform. Somebody said he looked like—a general."

"A what?" Mrs. Knapp said.

Mrs. Randy's hand fluttered to her lace collar. "For heaven's sake. What an odd thing!"

"Never mind," Wally's mother said firmly. "Let's get on with things. We've less than an hour."

The guests were already arriving. Only a few were members of Mrs. Randy's immediate family, and the majority were Knapp-connected people. In their finery, the rich were barely distinguishable from the middle class, and their exclamations over the splendor of the decorations were gratifying to Mrs. Randy, who had depleted her meager resources almost to the penny for her daughter's wedding.

Many of the guests were friends of the Knapp family, like Cornell Meyers, a promising young attorney, who delighted Mrs. Randy with a three-minute peroration concerning her daughter's charms.

At last only an hour remained

before the ceremony, and the two mothers split off for last-minute words to their respective children. The guests milled about the lower floor of the house, talking loudly and cheerfully, their spirits undampened by the weather. The bridesmaids giggled and scurried around the staircase, and the soprano was on a frantic search for sheet music.

The groom, flanked by ushers, was handsome and serene in his morning coat.

As the minutes ticked away, people began hunting for other people, and there were hushed conferences about this or that aspect of the ceremony.

It was at ten minutes of twelve that they heard the shot.

The sound of it was so unexpected that it was ignored for a moment, as if it had never existed. Then somebody mentioned it aloud, and Cornell Meyers was the first to describe it accurately as gunfire.

A delegation of guests decided to investigate. It had come from somewhere outside, and the prevalent theory was backfire from a passing automobile.

They opened the doors that led to the terrace. There was nothing to be seen at first but the brief stretch of grounds that were part of the Randy property, misty and damp in the fine drizzle. Meyers and two of the ushers stepped outside, with the others cautious



about exposing their well-tailored formal clothes to the rain.

"I'll swear it was a gunshot," Meyers said. "I've heard enough of them."

The two ushers looked at the attorney respectfully. One of them, an athletic youth with short red hair, went poking about the bushes. His search was successful, and he shouted to the others.

"What is it?" Meyers said.

"Over here—"

Meyers bent down and examined the figure lying on the wet ground. He said something surprisingly vulgar, and ordered one of his companions to assist him. Together, they hoisted the man from the ground, and the other usher retreated to the terrace and closed the doors, as if to spare the guests the grim scene outside.

"Take him around the back," Meyers instructed. "There's a door that leads to the kitchen. We can

carry him into the library without anyone seeing us."

By this time, someone inside had located Mrs. Randy and informed her of the peculiar circumstances. She looked startled, and turned to Mrs. Knapp with imploring eyes. Together, they left the front room and made their way to the library, just in time to see Meyers and the usher bringing in the strange, soiled figure.

"What is it?" Mrs. Randy shrieked. "What's happened?"

"Damned if I know," Meyers said rudely. "Somebody better call a doctor."

The redhaired usher looked up from the leather couch on which the man was stretched.

"Late for that," he said curtly. "This man's dead."

Mrs. Randy shrieked again, and Wally's mother put a restraining hand on her arm.

"The wedding!" Mrs. Randy moaned. "The wedding!"

"Don't worry about the wedding," Mrs. Knapp said sharply. "Nobody has to know about this yet but ourselves. No use upsetting all these preparations. We'll go on with it as if nothing has happened."

"I don't know," Meyers said. "He's been shot. We'll have to call the police."

"Not now! Not now!" Mrs. Randy pleaded.

"Mrs. Randy is quite right," Willy's mother said coolly. "The

ceremony will only take fifteen minutes; then we can call the police. I'll speak to Dr. Longstreet and have him abbreviate things."

"Thank you," Mrs. Randy said tearfully. "Thank you, Lydia."

"That's quite all right, Margaret," Mrs. Knapp said, and a bond had been suddenly created between the two mothers.

The ceremony was lovely, if somewhat rapid. Then Cornell Meyers telephoned the police.

Acting Lieutenant Steve Godwin appreciated the difficulty of the situation the moment he arrived. While the guests were enjoying the free-flowing champagne in the next room, he examined the body of the dead man.

His first glance at it brought a reaction of surprise to his young lean face.

"What the hell!" he said. "Is this a wedding or a costume party?"

"It's a wedding," Cornell Meyers said grimly. "But don't ask me to explain what *he* was doing here."

"Do you know who he is?"

"Never saw him before in my life."

Steve Godwin looked again.

The man was about fifty years of age, his gray hair thin and patchy, his pale narrow cheeks bristling with short stubble. He was average in height, and sparsely built.

But it wasn't his physical ap-

pearance that startled and bewildered the lieutenant. It was his clothing. The gray, wide-brimmed hat, the high-buttoned tunic, the insignia on his shoulders, lapel, and chest, were unmistakable.

It was the body of an officer in the great army of the Confederacy, a general from the ranks of a long-lost cause.

"A Confederate general," Steve Godwin muttered. "Shot to death at a wedding. What the hell does it mean?"

Twelve years had gone by, and Godwin had never found the answer. In all his experience, he had never spent so many hours questioning so many witnesses, and with so little profit. If there had been footprints that would have named the killer, they had been obliterated by the feet of the ushers.

If there had been eyewitnesses, they had failed to come forward. Worst of all, if there had been a possible motive for the murder, it had never been unearthed.

The largest part of the succeeding investigation had concerned the dead man's identity. Without this one piece of information, Godwin's efforts had been completely frustrated. But the strange Confederate general had gone unnamed to his grave.

Fingerprints had provided no clue, and all the normal sources of information were useless. He was merely a gray figure from the

American past, who had arrived out of Time to have his life terminated at a wedding party.

But on the afternoon of March 14th, twelve years from the general's murder, Captain Steve Godwin had at last found the necessary clue.

He closed the file in front of him and slipped it into his top drawer. Then he put on his hat and coat, and told the police officer out front that he would be gone for several hours.

At Grand Central Station, he bought a ticket to White Plains, and sat in thoughtful silence throughout the railroad journey. At the White Plains station, he gave the hack driver the address of the unfortunate Walter Knapp.

He spent almost two hours with Gloria's husband, and then called for a taxi to drive him the short distance to the home of Gloria's mother, Mrs. Margaret Randy.

Mrs. Randy didn't remember him, and he realized that the years had been kinder to her than to himself. She was slightly plumper than he recalled, but her face was still youthful and pretty, despite the etched, tragic lines that pulled her features downwards.

They sat in the living room, rapidly darkening in the twilight, and the captain spoke solicitously of Mrs. Randy's lovely daughter.

"Believe me, Mrs. Randy," he said, "I'm terribly sorry about what's happened to Gloria. But it

made me wonder about something, and I've just paid a visit to Walter, your son-in-law. He told me what the medical people said about your daughter, about the possibility of—inherited mental disease. Do you see what I'm driving at?"

"Yes," Mrs. Randy said. "I think I do."

"That made me think of the general," Godwin said. "He was a relative, wasn't he?"

"He was my husband, James," the woman answered. "He hadn't died, as my daughter and my own family believed. He'd gone insane, almost twenty years ago. James was a southerner; he believed he was the reincarnation of Général Lee. I placed him secretly in a private sanatorium in Oregon, under an assumed name. He escaped about three years be-

fore Gloria's wedding. Since that day, I lived in terror of his return."

"And he did return," the captain said gently.

"Yes. He must have read of Gloria's wedding; it was widely publicized. When I knew he was there, I knew what the result would be. I knew it would mean the end of Gloria's happiness, the end of all her wonderful plans. That's why I killed him. There was nothing else I could do."

Steve Godwin stood up. "Can you leave with me soon?"

"Of course. There's just one thing I wanted to ask. When my husband was well, he often spoke of his desire to be buried at Gettysburg. Do you suppose that could be arranged?"

"We'll see what we can do," the captain said.

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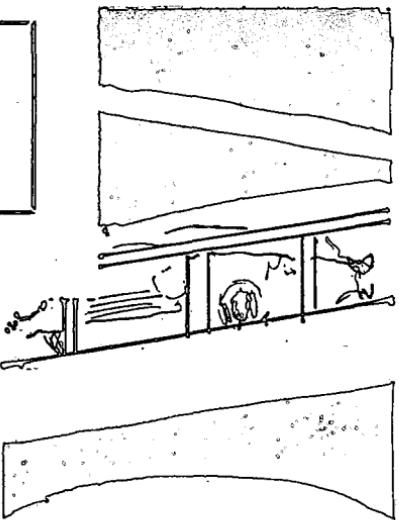
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LOSER

by JAMES McKIMMEY

*Beside him, the loser, she
stood, the lady who had won
it big—death at his hands!*

PETER DUNBAR sat in the keno section of a large Lake Tahoe casino with exactly six dollars and three cents left in his pocket. Twenty-seven, tall and slim with angular features, he wore a soft loosely woven sports jacket and dark slacks. Women, notably older ones, often thought that he owned a lean-and-hungry handsomeness, espe-



cially when he let his blond hair grow longer, as it was now. Well, he thought, he was lean and hungry, because good luck had steadily eluded him.

Now, because he was ultimately tired of failure, he was going to correct the deficiency by using someone else's.

The casino was bustling with summer-evening gamblers in from beaches, trails and golf courses. There was a musical show going on in the lounge at the far end of the giant room. Glasses clicked. Slot machines whirred. Croupiers chanted. Dunbar cared for nothing but the numbers which lighted on the keno board.

Behind the keno counter and its writers was a platform manned by a supervisor and assistant. A glass bowl containing eighty numbered ping-pong balls rested there.

When the game began, a switch was turned on, blowing air into the bowl, causing the balls to be mixed and then forced into a glass tube until twenty had been collected. The number of each ball in the tube was called over a PA system and lighted on the board. Players with tickets containing a sufficient number of the lighted twenty won.

Dunbar looked disinterestedly at his ticket, knowing that he would be lucky to get a single number. He had chosen a sixty-cent twelve spot; he had to have at least five numbers, or spots, to get back 50¢, more to win increasingly higher

amounts, up to twelve out of twelve, which would pay him \$25,000. He had one number.

Having checked the dismal results, he looked at the others seated in the section. Dismissed five days ago from his last job—bus boy in a large San Francisco hotel—with no other prospects in sight because of his employment record, he'd come here hoping finally to find the luck. He didn't. And so, as he used up his last funds, he began studying winners until he could pick them out every time. Eyes changed expression. Lids fluttered. Mouths curved. Postures became more erect. Movements were quicker.

He decided that nobody had caught this race too heavily. He walked to the counter and handed his ticket to a girl writer. She marked his selected numbers on a fresh blank; he would get that copy in exchange for his sixty cents, the duplicate would be held by the house as proof of a possible win.

He went back to his seat with his newly written ticket, knowing that—yes, he would be able to kill if it came to it.

When the next game began, somehow he knew that it was going to be the one to make it. Tensing, fingering his ticket absently, he saw a woman at his right sit more upright; he suddenly concentrated on nothing but her. She was perhaps fifty, with hair dyed black.

Her mouth curved. Her eyes became brighter. She began to blink

rapidly. When the last number was announced, she got up and walked quickly to the counter.

Not taking his eyes from her, Dunbar crumpled his own ticket into a pocket, then walked casually by the woman as the writer holding her ticket said: "Eight out of nine on a sixty-cent ticket—that's three thousand dollars."

Three grand! He'd never won twenty cents in his life. But he would fix that now. He walked away and stopped beside a bank of slot machines. He turned and looked back, knowing what was happening now. The writer would receive confirmation from her supervisor that the ticket had checked out against its duplicate and was valid, then she would pay the woman in cash.

Now, everything depended upon what the woman did next. She might play more keno; he would then have to wait. She might walk to a crap table and blow it all. Or she might take the money and leave—which was what Dunbar wanted her to do.

The woman placed the currency in her purse and walked swiftly in the direction of doors opening to a large parking lot. Relieved, Dunbar followed.

Outside were rows upon rows of cars parked beneath lamp lights spaced well apart. Entrances and exits to the lot were in front of the casino as well as in back, where there was a ramp leading in and out

—she strode in that direction, heels clicking.

Dunbar moved along behind her, idly, until he came to a row of cars a good distance from the casino. Then he bent down and began running.

The woman stopped beside a blue sedan near the foot of the ramp. Dunbar crouched one row of cars behind her and drew from his jacket a sock containing a heavy steel ball. He jogged toward her. She turned as he nearly reached her; she looked at his face, a scream beginning to shape her mouth.

He swung hard enough to kill and stopped the scream before it came. She collapsed, letting go of the purse. Dunbar bent, opened it, found the money, jammed it into a pocket. Then, as he prepared to flee, a car appeared, rolling down the ramp. Its headlights flashed against him. Dunbar dashed between cars, ducking.

Now a spotlight flared. A voice called for him to stop. Cop, he thought with dismay. Not bad enough luck that a car had to come off that ramp at that exact second, but so absolutely bad that it had to be a cop's car. He ran between vehicles. The spot hunted for him hungrily; he heard the sound of running behind him. One in the car, he decided, another on foot. But they weren't going to—

The shot caught him in the back. He went down in a somersault, dying.

In an office beside the highway, the uniformed sheriff's lieutenant shook his head. "It doesn't make sense. He follows a woman who just won three thousand on a keno game and kills her for it. But in his own pocket he's got a ticket on the

same game worth twenty-five thousand dollars! Twelve out of twelve numbers! Why the hell didn't he collect?"

The sergeant shrugged. "Like you said, Lieutenant, it just doesn't make sense."



THE GUILTSTONE DAGGER by Jonathan Craig

(Concluded from page 116)

face is going to tell me all I need to know."

Joyce started to rise, but Harry pushed her back down.

"I won't let you do such a thing," she said. "It's positively insane, Harry. You must be insane, even to think of it."

"We'll see who's insane, all right," Harry said, as he got to his feet. "Nobody murders my best friend and gets away with it. That little white dagger is going to unmask a dirty murderer for us, Joyce."

"And we're not even going to wait until tonight. Stella will be home by now. I'll mix us a couple of fast drinks, and then we'll go

down there and put her to the test."

"Harry, in heaven's name! You can't—"

"You'll see whether I can or not," Harry said as he dropped the dagger in Joyce's lap and turned in the direction of the kitchen. "Take a close look at it. It's ancient. It's been used so long it's worn as smooth as an eggshell."

He was halfway across the room when Joyce's startled gasp caused him to pause and turn back toward her.

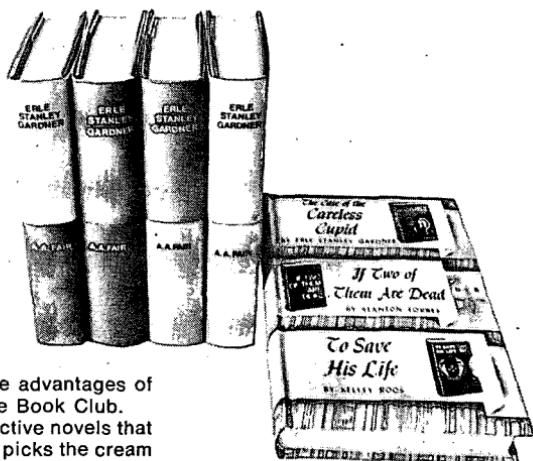
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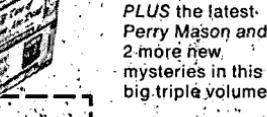
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